

# LONE WOLF

AND

子連水狼

# CUB

VOLUME 4

## THE BELL WARDEN

By KAZUO KOIKE  
& GOSEKI KOJIMA



子連水猿



# LONE WOLF AND CUB



story  
**KAZUO KOIKE**  
art  
**GOSEKI KOJIMA**



**DARK HORSE MANGA™**

translation  
**DANA LEWIS**  
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**DIGITAL CHAMELEON**  
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THE  
BELL  
WARDEN

By KAZUO KOIKE  
& GOSEKI KOJIMA

子連れ狼



VOLUME

4

# A NOTE TO READERS

*Lone Wolf and Cub* is famous for its carefully researched re-creation of Edo-Period Japan. To preserve the flavor of the work, we have chosen to retain many Edo-Period terms that have no direct equivalents in English. Japanese is written in a mix of Chinese ideograms and a syllabic writing system, resulting in numerous synonyms. In the glossary, you may encounter words with multiple meanings. These are words written with Chinese ideograms that are pronounced the same but carry different meanings. A Japanese reader seeing the different ideograms would know instantly which meaning it is, but these synonyms can cause confusion when Japanese is spelled out in our alphabet. *O-yurushi o* (please forgive us)!

# LONE WOLF AND CUB



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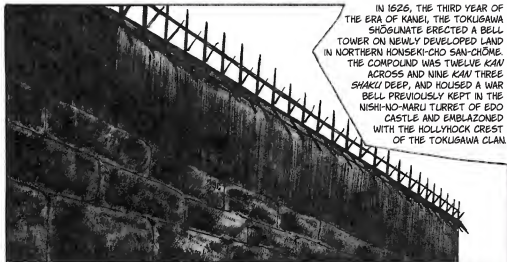
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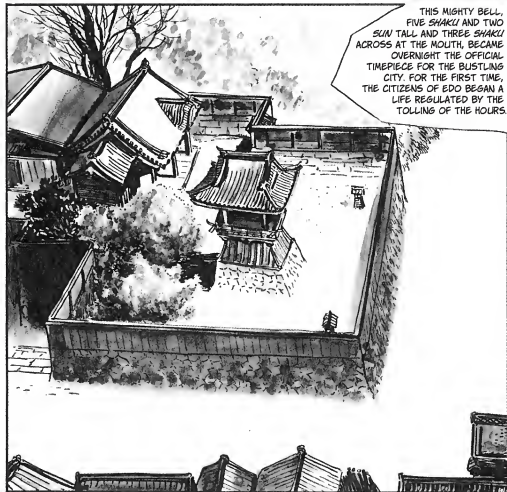
*the twentieth*

**Tsufi  
Genshichi  
the Bell  
Warden**



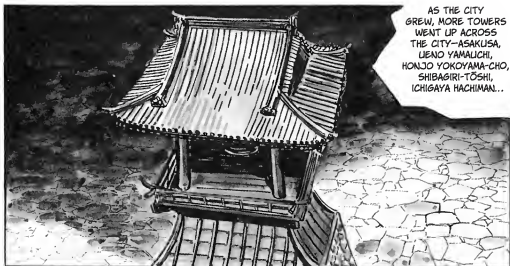


IN 1626, THE THIRD YEAR OF THE ERA OF KANEI, THE TOKUGAWA SHÖGUNATE ERECTED A BELL TOWER ON NEWLY DEVELOPED LAND IN NORTHERN HONSEKI-CHO SAN-CHÖME. THE COMPOUND WAS TWELVE KAN ACROSS AND NINE KAN THREE SHAKU DEEP, AND HOUSED A WAR BELL PREVIOUSLY KEPT IN THE NISHI-NO-MARU TURRET OF EDO CASTLE AND EMBLAZONED WITH THE HOLLYHOCK CREST OF THE TOKUGAWA CLAN.

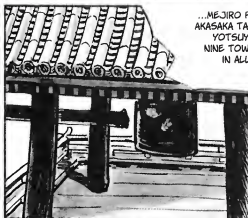


THIS MIGHTY BELL, FIVE SHAKU AND TWO SUN TALL AND THREE SHAKU ACROSS AT THE MOUTH, BECAME OVERNIGHT THE OFFICIAL TIMEPIECE FOR THE BUSTLING CITY. FOR THE FIRST TIME, THE CITIZENS OF EDO BEGAN A LIFE REGULATED BY THE TOLLING OF THE HOURS.

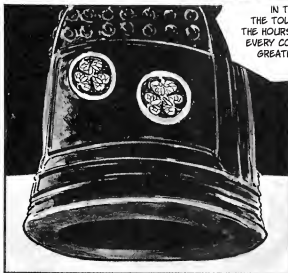




AS THE CITY  
GREW, MORE TOWERS  
WENT UP ACROSS  
THE CITY—ASAKUSA,  
UENO YAMAUCHI,  
HONJO YOKOYAMA-CHO,  
SHIBASIRI-TŌSHI,  
ICHIGAYA HACHIMAN...



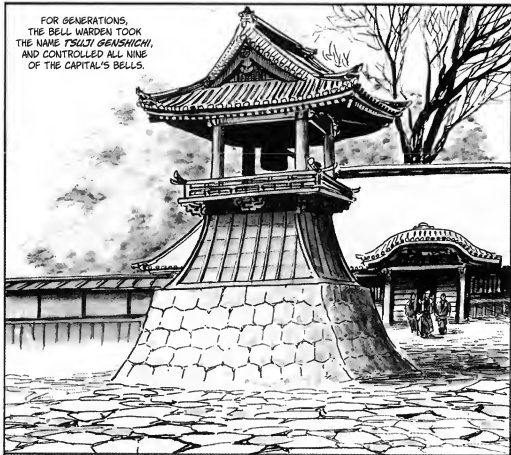
...MEJIRO FUDŌ,  
AKASAKA TAMACHI,  
YOTSUYA—  
NINE TOWERS  
IN ALL.



IN TIME,  
THE TOLLING OF  
THE HOURS REACHED  
EVERY CORNER OF  
GREATER EDO.



FOR GENERATIONS,  
THE BELL WARDEN TOOK  
THE NAME TSUJI GENSHICHI,  
AND CONTROLLED ALL NINE  
OF THE CAPITAL'S BELLS.





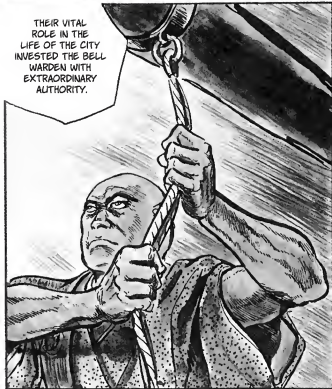
\* TSUJI GENSHICHI



THE GENSHICHI  
BELL TOWERS WERE  
ABOVE THE LAW.

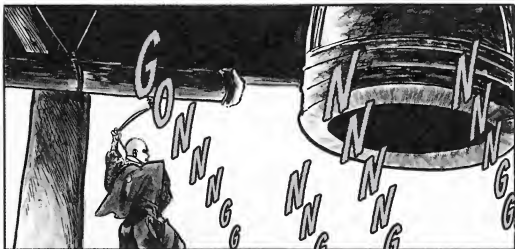


THEIR VITAL  
ROLE IN THE  
LIFE OF THE CITY  
WARDEN THE BELL  
WARDEN WITH  
EXTRAORDINARY  
AUTHORITY.





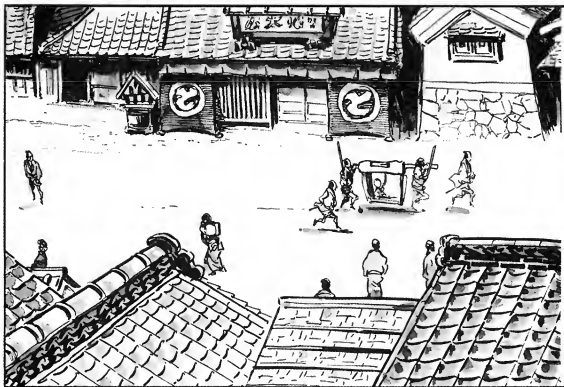


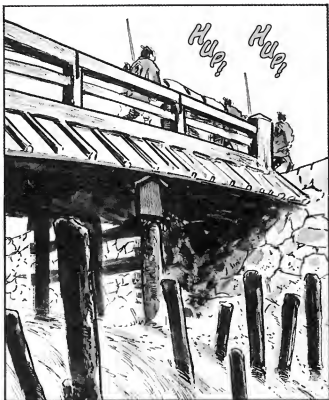


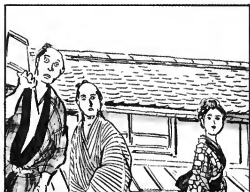


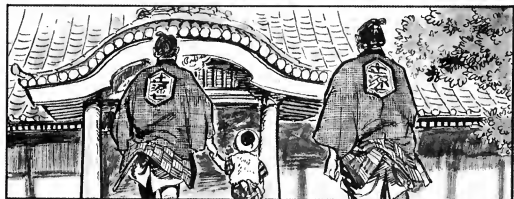
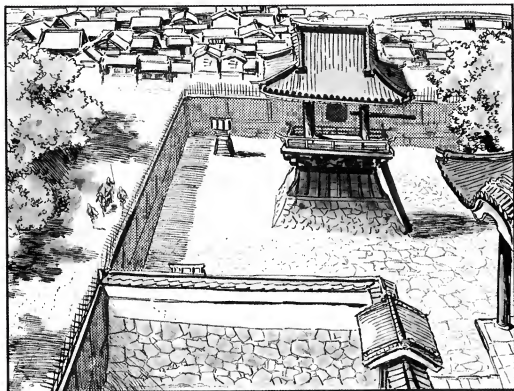


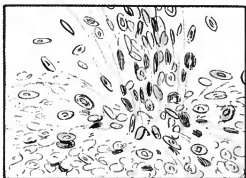
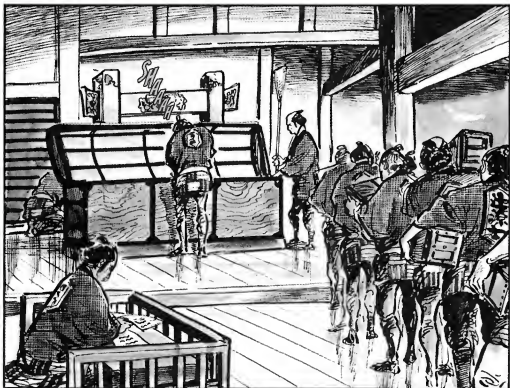


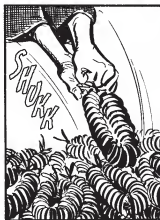
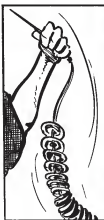
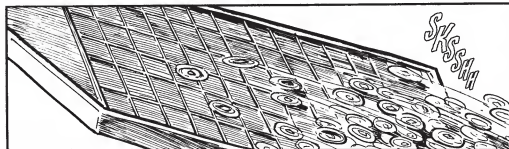
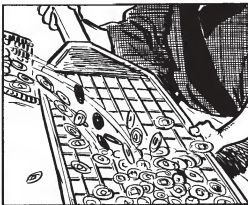
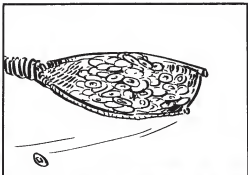




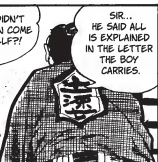


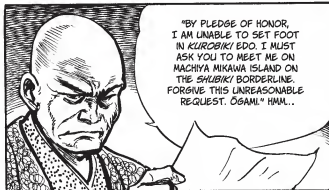




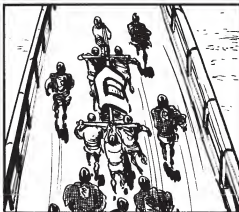


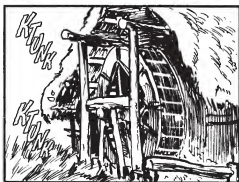








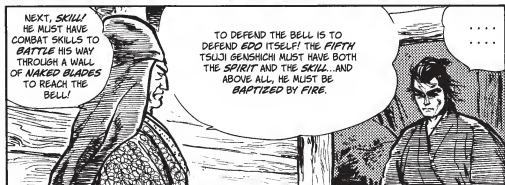


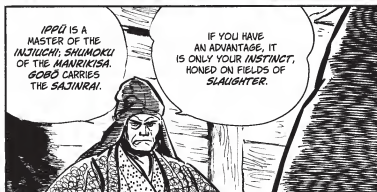
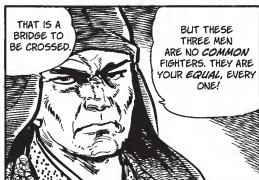


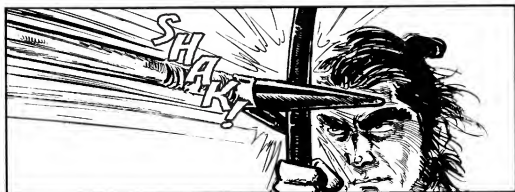
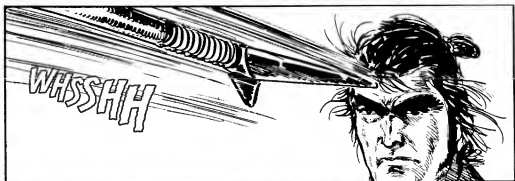


FOR GENERATIONS, THE EDO BELL WARDENS HAVE TAKEN THE NAME OF TSUJI GENSUICHI. I AM THE FOURTH.

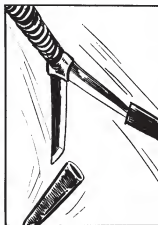
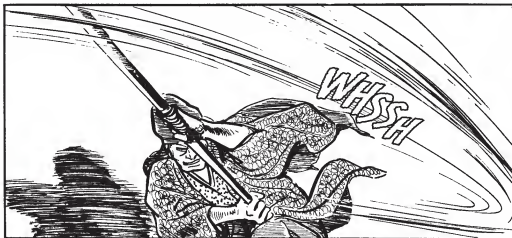
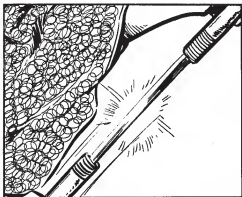


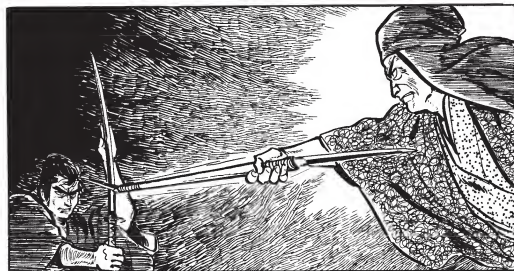
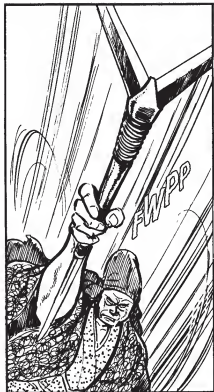




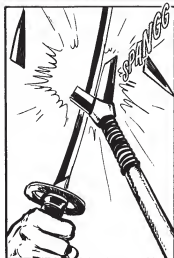


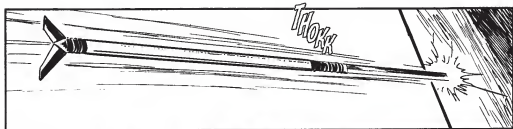












MAGNIFICENT!  
YOU'RE EVERYTHING  
I EXPECTED!  
I'M HUMBLLED!

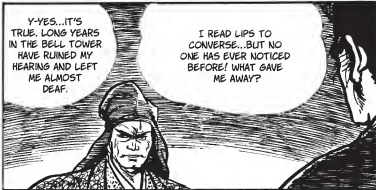
TO TURN THE  
STRENGTHS OF  
MY KASEZUE  
INTO WEAKNESS,  
AND SNAP THE  
TINES...



I SEE  
YOU ARE  
HARD OF  
HEARING...



Y-YES...IT'S  
TRUE. LONG YEARS  
IN THE BELL TOWER  
HAVE RUINED MY  
HEARING AND LEFT  
ME ALMOST  
DEAF.



I READ LIPS TO  
CONVERSE...BUT NO  
ONE HAS EVER NOTICED  
BEFORE! WHAT GAVE  
ME AWAY?

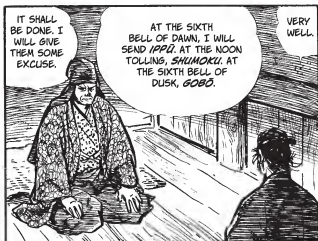


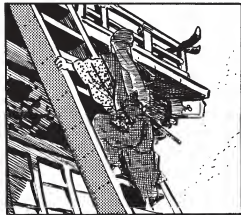
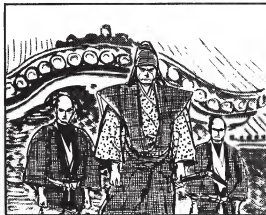
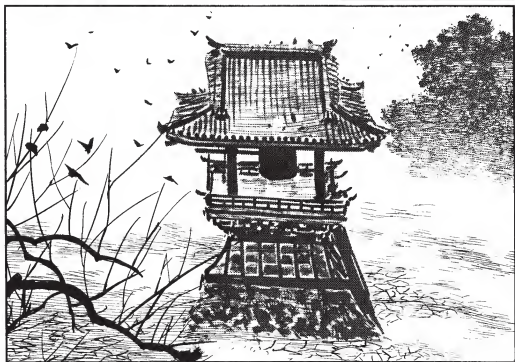
HAD YOU HEARD THE RING  
OF MY DOTANUKI'S BLADE,  
YOU WOULD HAVE REALIZED  
THE TINES OF YOUR KASEZUE  
WOULD BE NO MATCH FOR IT.

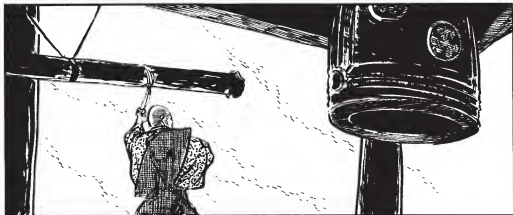
HRN!



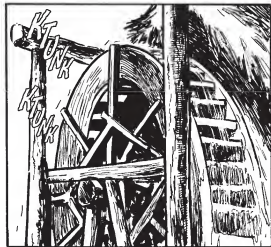
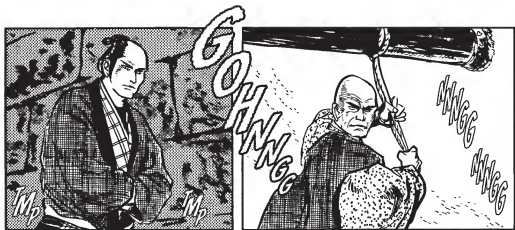
I HAVE PLEDGED  
NOT TO SET FOOT  
IN EDO. LET THE  
THREE COME TO  
ME.

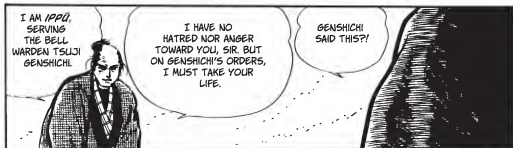
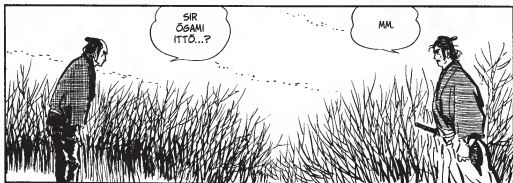
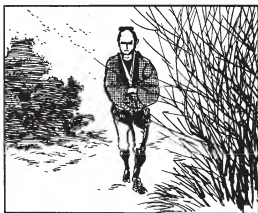


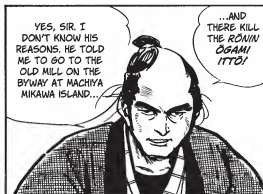










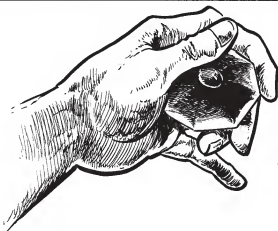


...AND THERE KILL THE RONIN OGAMI ITTÔ!

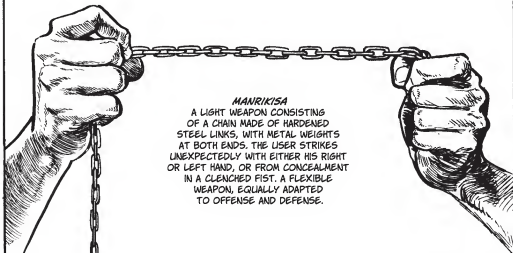








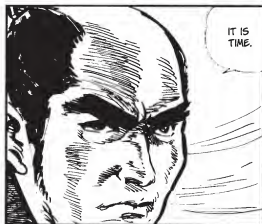
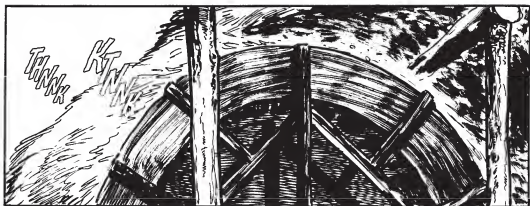
**INJIUCHI TSUBUTE**  
MADE OF TEMPERED STEEL,  
AN OCTAGONAL WEAPON  
APPROXIMATELY ONE *SUN*  
FIVE *BUN* IN DIAMETER, AND  
THREE *BUN* THICK. THE EDGES  
ARE SHARPENED RAZOR-THIN,  
MAKING IT A DEADLY  
KILLING DEVICE.

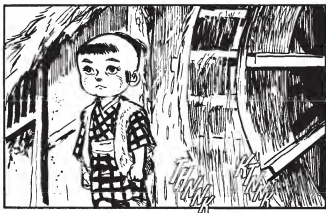
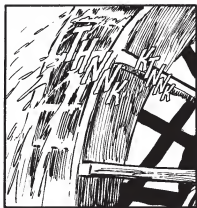


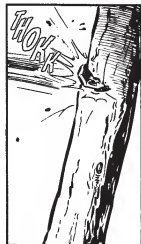
**MANRIKISA**  
A LIGHT WEAPON CONSISTING  
OF A CHAIN MADE OF HARDENED  
STEEL LINKS, WITH METAL WEIGHTS  
AT BOTH ENDS. THE USER STRIKES  
UNEXPECTEDLY WITH EITHER HIS RIGHT  
OR LEFT HAND, OR FROM CONCEALMENT  
IN A CLENCHED FIST. A FLEXIBLE  
WEAPON, EQUALLY ADAPTED  
TO OFFENSE AND DEFENSE.

**SAJINRAI**  
A BLINDING COMPOUND,  
COMPRISED OF A MIX OF  
FERROUS SAND AND STRYCHNINE  
NITRATE. THE KEY TO DEFENSE  
IS TO KNOW WHERE THE  
POWDER IS CONCEALED...



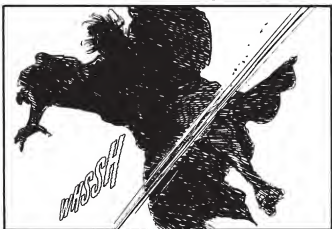


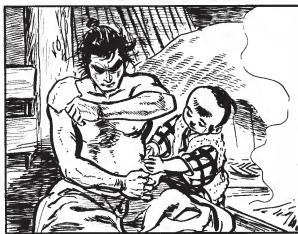




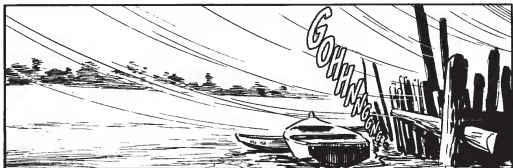


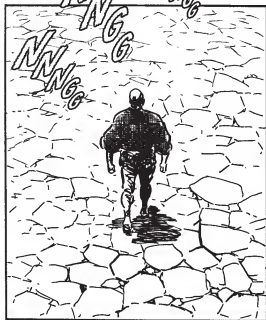




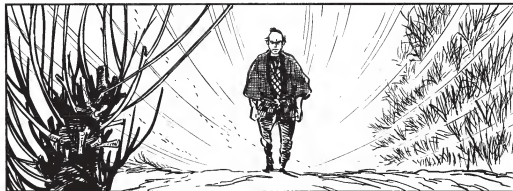












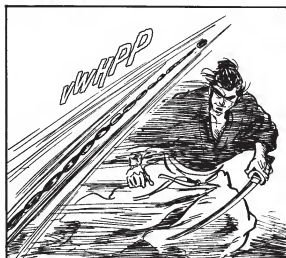
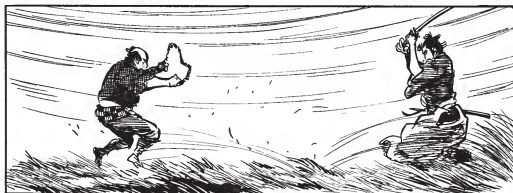




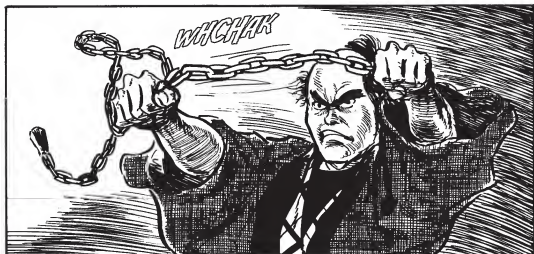


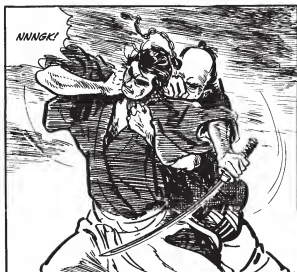




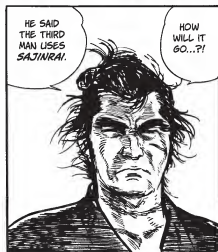
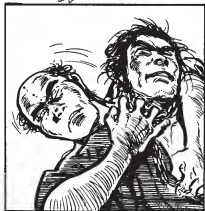




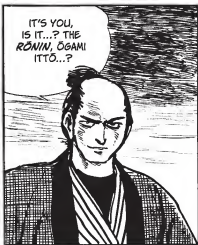
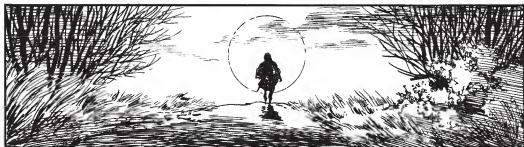
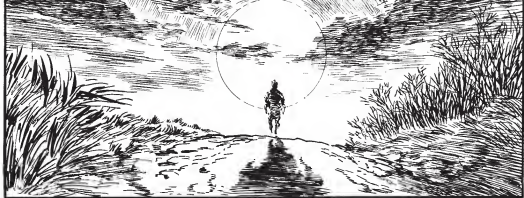




KTHINK GRRKK THINNK NINGK!









MM.

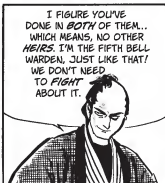
THREE  
THOUSAND RYŌ.  
HOW ABOUT IT...  
WANNA DEAL?!



WHAT  
?!



I GOT A WEE  
BIT BETTER HEAD  
ON MY SHOULDERS  
THAN MY BIG  
BROTHERS.  
SEE?



I FIGURE YOU'VE  
DONE IN *BOTH* OF THEM...  
WHICH MEANS, NO OTHER  
*HEIRS*. I'M THE FIFTH BELL  
WARDEN, JUST LIKE THAT!  
WE DON'T NEED  
TO FIGHT  
ABOUT IT.



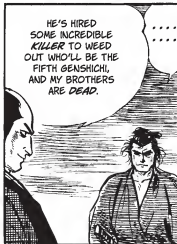
....  
....

BELL WARDEN...?  
HEH... MORE LIKE *MONEY* WARDEN!  
THAT'S HOW MUCH CASH POURS IN.  
WE'RE COLLECTING THE BELL TAX  
FROM THE WHOLE CITY, SEE? A  
FORTUNE, ALL FOR ME! COME ON,  
FRIEND—I'LL MAKE IT  
FIVE THOUSAND.



YOU WERE  
BROTHERS?

YEAH. MY OLDER  
BROTHERS LEAVE AT  
THE SIXTH MORNING BELL AND  
THE NOON BELL, AND THEY  
DON'T COME BACK. THE SIXTH  
EVENING BELL RINGS, AND  
IT'S MY TURN! EVEN AN  
IDIOT CAN FIGURE  
IT OUT.

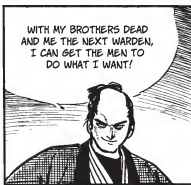


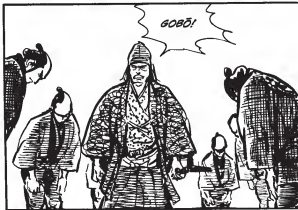
HE'S HIRED  
SOME INCREDIBLE  
KILLER TO WEED  
OUT WHO'LL BE THE  
FIFTH GENSHICHI,  
AND MY BROTHERS  
ARE DEAD.

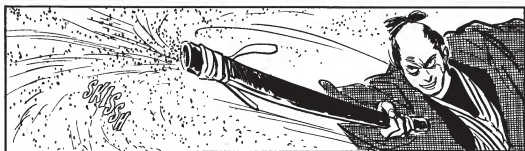
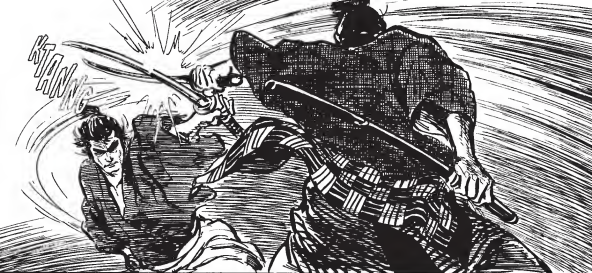
....  
....

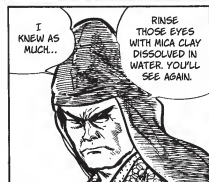






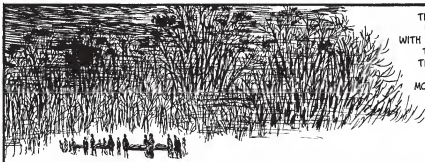












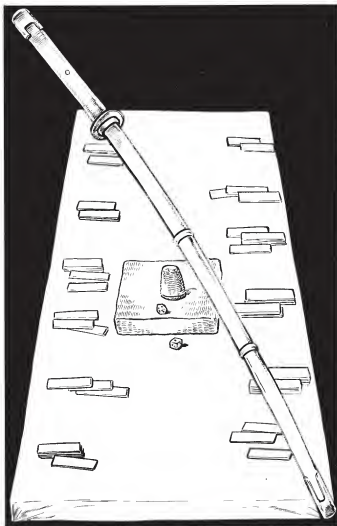
THE LINE OF BELL  
WARDENS ENDED  
WITH TSUJI GENSHICHI  
THE FOURTH. THE  
TIME BELLS WERE  
SUBSEQUENTLY  
MOVED TO TEMPLE  
GROUNDS, AND  
ENTRUSTED TO  
BUDDHIST  
MONKS.

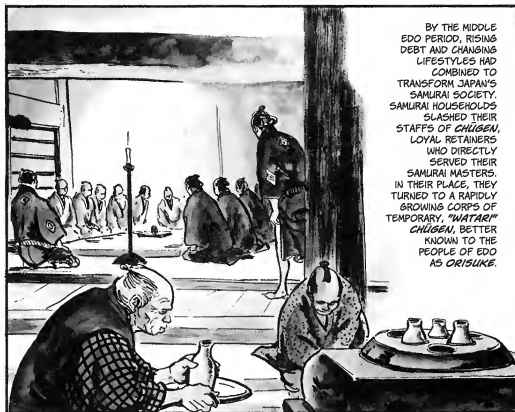




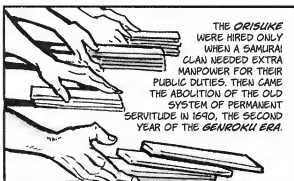
*the twenty-first*

# Unfaithful Retainers





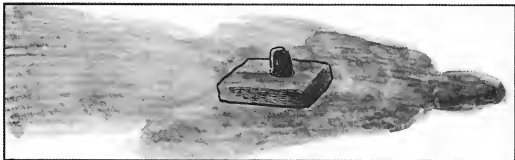
BY THE MIDDLE EDO PERIOD, RISING DEBT AND CHANGING LIFESTYLES HAD COMBINED TO TRANSFORM JAPAN'S SAMURAI SOCIETY. SAMURAI HOUSEHOLDS SLASHED THEIR STAFFS OF *CHUGEN*, LOYAL RETAINERS WHO DIRECTLY SERVED THEIR SAMURAI MASTERS. IN THEIR PLACE, THEY TURNED TO A RAPIDLY GROWING CORPS OF TEMPORARY, "*WATARI*" *CHUGEN*, BETTER KNOWN TO THE PEOPLE OF EDO AS *ORISUKE*.



THE CHÜGEN-GASHIRA,  
PERMANENTLY EMPLOYED  
BOSSSES WHO OVERSAW A  
SAMURAI HOUSEHOLD'S CHÜGEN  
STAFF, GAINED THE POWER TO  
HIRE AND FIRE ORISUKE AT  
THEIR OWN DISCRETION...



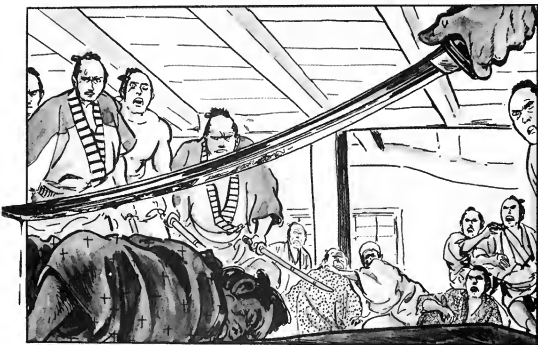
...AND THE  
ENTIRE SYSTEM  
VEERED TOWARD  
LAWLESSNESS.











THE *ORISUKE* WERE A NEW BREED. THEY SERVED THE SAMURAI FAMILIES, YET SHARED NONE OF THE VALUES OF SAMURAI SOCIETY—NO *LOYALTY*, NO *SELF-SACRIFICE*, NO CONCERN FOR THE FACE AND HONOR OF THEIR MASTERS. THE *BOND* BETWEEN MASTER AND RETAINER HAD BEEN SEVERED COMPLETELY.

SAMURAI SERVANTS HAD TRADITIONALLY FOLLOWED THE CODES OF SAMURAI SOCIETY, LOYAL TO MASTERS WITH THE SAMURAI LICENSE TO KILL—THE RIGHT OF *SEISATSU YODATSU*. BUT NOW THE *ORISUKE* TURNED THE FUNCTIONS OF SAMURAI SOCIETY ON THEIR HEAD.







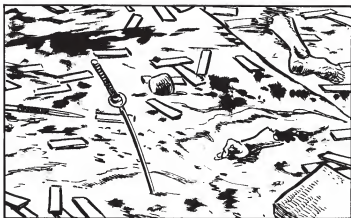
THEY WERE, AFTER ALL, ONLY **MERCENARIES**. AND WHILE THEIR **SAMURAI MASTERS** FOOTED THE BILL, THEY OWED THEIR **TRUE ALLEGIANCE** TO THE **CHÜGEN-GASHIRA** THAT HIRED THEM. IT WAS THESE **ORISUKE** BOSSES, HEADING UP GANGS THAT SHARED THE **SEISATSU YODATSU** RIGHTS OF **SAMURAI SOCIETY** AND WERE ALREADY **SYSTEMATICALLY** ORGANIZED BY **HOUSEHOLD**, THAT QUICKLY TURNED MANY **ORISUKE** TO A LIFE OF **GAMBLING** AND **CRIME**.

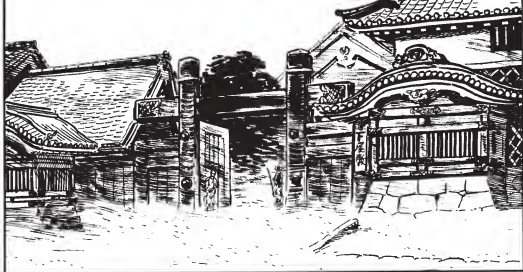


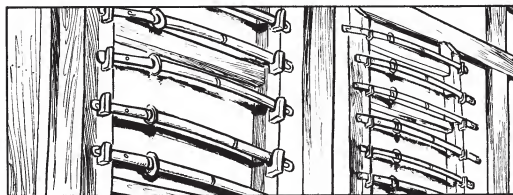
THE AUTHORITIES WERE HELPLESS TO INTERVENE. IF THEY SUPPRESSED THE *ORISUKE*, THEY WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO MOBILIZE MAN-POWER ON COMMAND. AND THUS THE *ORISUKE* SYNDICATES GREW EVER LARGER AND COCKIER, WITH THE TACIT APPROVAL OF THE *DAIMYO* AND THE *HATAMOTO* SAMURAI FAMILIES WHO NOW RELIED UPON THEM.



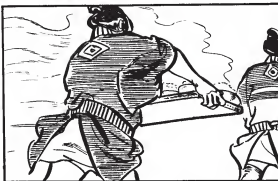
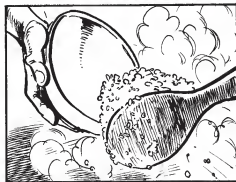
MOREOVER, THE BARRACKS IN THE SAMURAI FAMILY COMPOUNDS WHERE THE *ORISUKE* LIVED WERE BEYOND THE REACH OF THE LAW, AND THUS TAILOR-MADE FOR ILLEGAL GAMBLING. SOON MANY BARRACKS BOSSES, THE *HEYA-GASHIRA*, WERE PRESIDING OVER GANGS OF UNRULY GAMBLERS. THE *ORISUKE* WERE TRULY THE TWISTED OFFSPRING OF SAMURAI SOCIETY ITSELF.



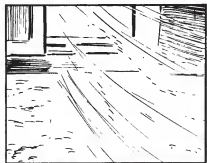


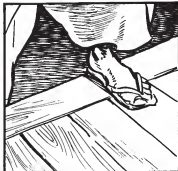


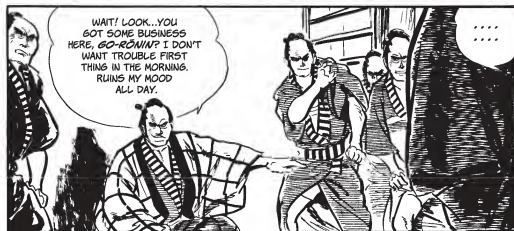


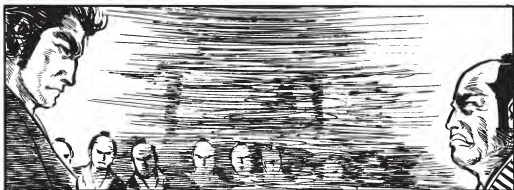
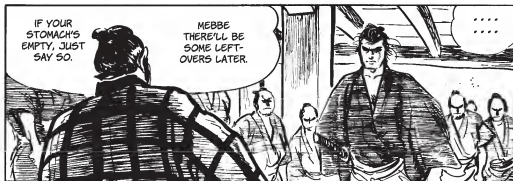










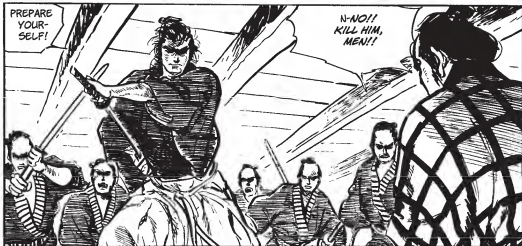
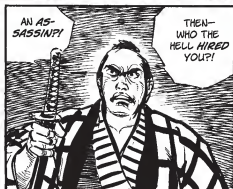
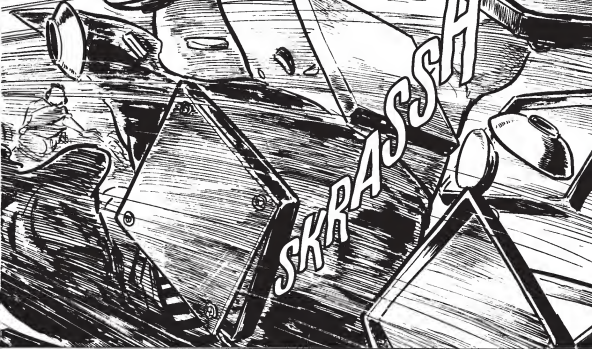


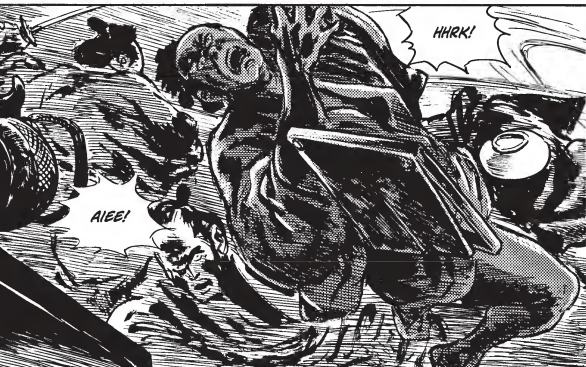




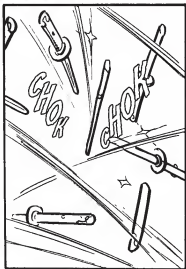
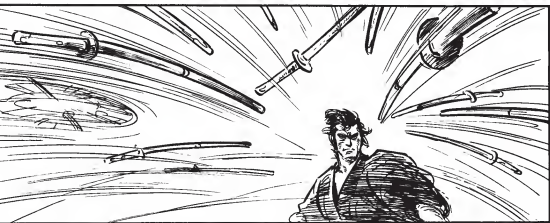
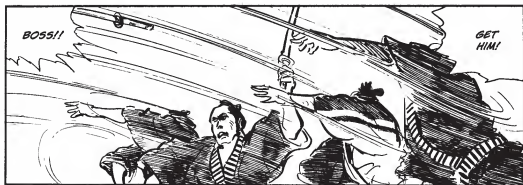


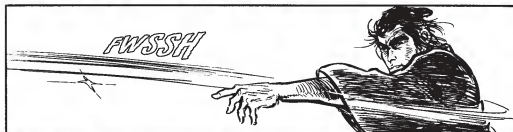




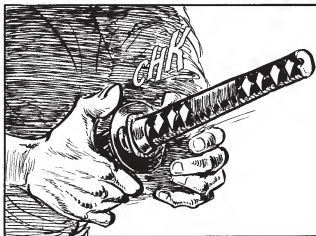
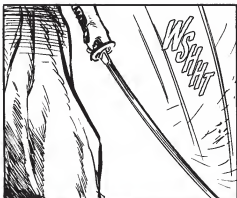




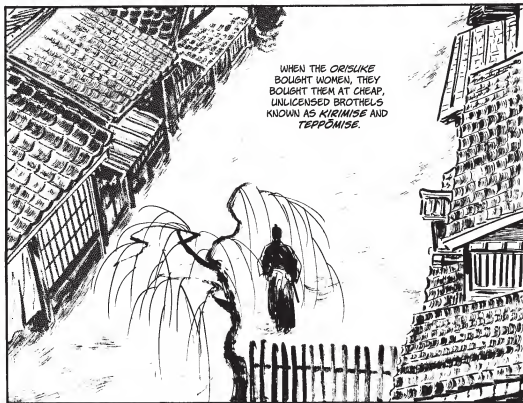
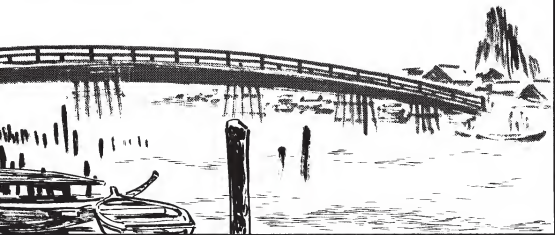


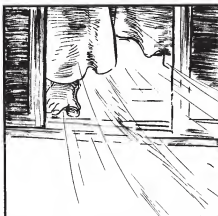
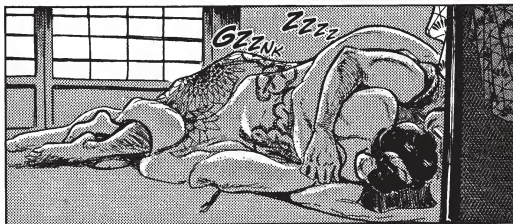




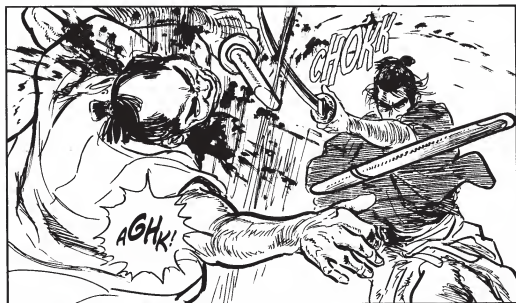






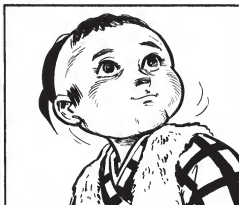








EDO WAS DIVIDED INTO TWO SECTIONS, MARKED ON THE MAPS BY THE *KUROBIKI* BLACK LINE AND THE *SHUBIKI* RED LINE. WITHIN THE *KUROBIKI* LINE LAY THE SIX HUNDRED FORTY-SEVEN TOWNS IN EXISTENCE SINCE TOKUGAWA IYASU MOVED INTO EDO CASTLE—THIS WAS THE *GO-FUNAI*. THE TWO HUNDRED FIFTY-SEVEN NEW TOWNS THAT HAD SPRUNG UP AS EDO FLOURISHED LAY WITHIN THE *SHUBIKI*, AND WERE KNOWN AS THE EDO *MACHINAMICHI*. THE DIVISION REFLECTED THE SHOGUNATE'S LAND TAX POLICIES.



ON THIS LATE SPRING DAY,  
THE HEYA-GASHIRA OF THREE  
WATARI-CHUGEN GROUPS LIVING ON  
DAIMYŌ ESTATES WITHIN THE SHUBIKI  
LINE WERE MURDERED BY AN  
ASSASSIN IDENTIFYING HIMSELF ONLY  
AS LONE WOLF AND CUB. THE VICTIMS  
WERE THE HEYA-GASHIRA  
GOYU-NO-RIKUZŌ, ABUKUMA,  
AND DOSHŪ-NO-ADASUKE.

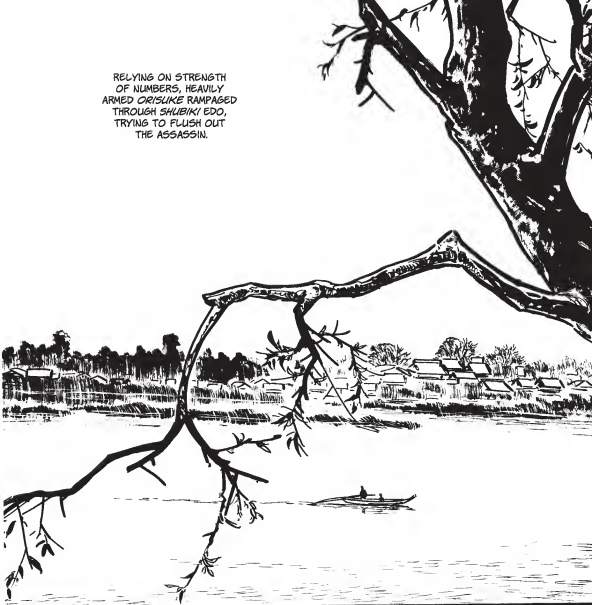


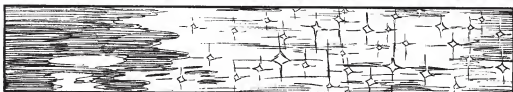
THE REASON FOR THE  
KILLINGS WAS A MYSTERY.  
THE PANICKED HEYA-GASHIRA  
OF OTHER ORISUKE GANGS  
JOINED TOGETHER AS  
RUMOR SPREAD.

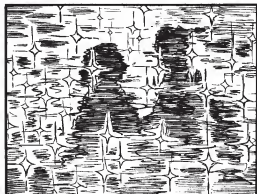
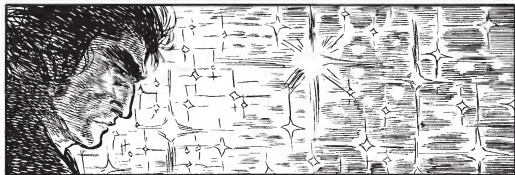


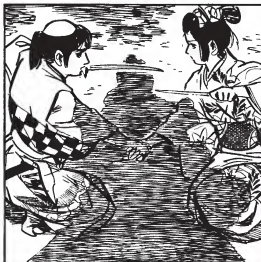


RELYING ON STRENGTH  
OF NUMBERS, HEAVILY  
ARMED ORISUKE RAMPAGED  
THROUGH SHUBIKI EDO,  
TRYING TO FLUSH OUT  
THE ASSASSIN.

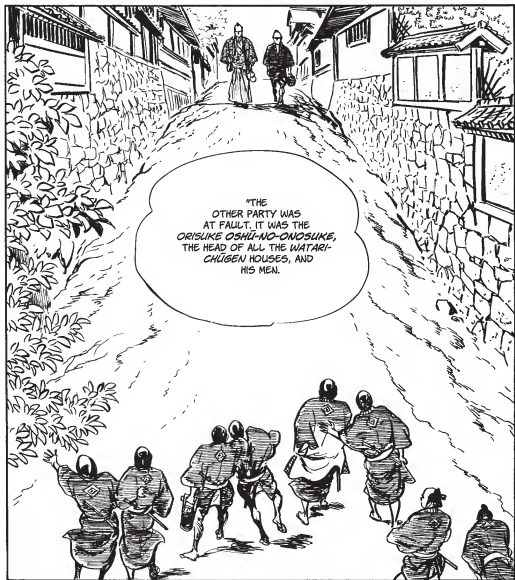












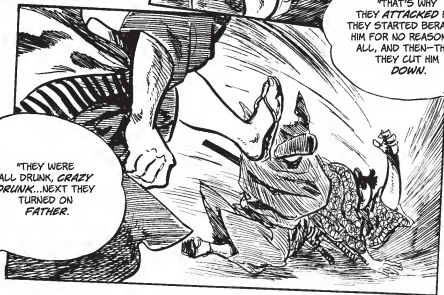
"THE  
OTHER PARTY WAS  
AT FAULT. IT WAS THE  
ORISUKE OSHŪ-NO-ONOSUKE,  
THE HEAD OF ALL THE WATARI-  
CHŪGEN HOUSES, AND  
HIS MEN.

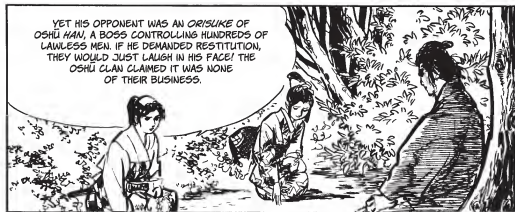
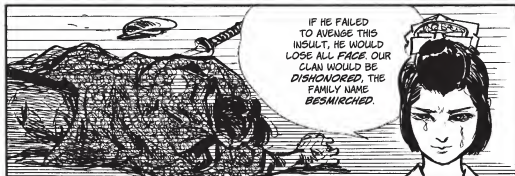
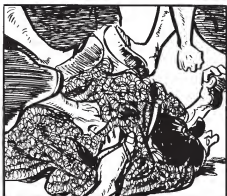




"THAT'S WHY  
THEY ATTACKED HIM.  
THEY STARTED BERATING  
HIM FOR NO REASON AT  
ALL, AND THEN—THEN  
THEY CUT HIM  
DOWN."

"THEY WERE  
ALL DRUNK, CRAZY  
DRUNK...NEXT THEY  
TURNED ON  
FATHER."









...THEN  
THE HONOR  
OF THE  
SUZUKI  
CLAN CAN  
STILL BE  
RESTORED!

WE HAD  
LOST ALL HOPE,  
AND WERE READY TO  
DIE IN SHAME. BUT IF  
**YOU** CAN JOIN OUR  
ADAUCHI, AND KILL  
OUR FATHER'S  
ENEMY...



I  
WILL  
NOT!



MY ROAD IS THE  
**ASSASSIN'S ROAD**. I  
WILL PERFORM **ANY** ASSASSI-  
NATION. BUT I CANNOT...  
**WILL NOT** TAKE PART  
IN ANOTHER'S  
ADAUCHI.

NING!

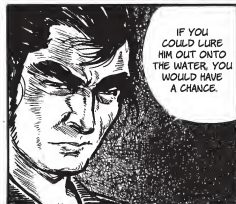
OH,  
NO...



IT IS THE PATH  
OF FILIAL PIETY  
TO STRIVE TO KILL  
ONOSUKE, EVEN IF IT  
SEEMS OVERWHELM-  
ING...EVEN IMPOS-  
SIBLE. IT IS YOUR  
PATH ALONE!



WE KNOW THIS...BUT,  
BUT GOOD SIR-IT'S **OSHŪ-  
NO-ONOSUKE**, A MAN WITH THE  
STRENGTH OF **TEN**, GUARDED BY  
**HUNDREDS** OF HIS MEN! HOW  
CAN THE TWO OF US...?



IF YOU  
COULD LURE  
HIM OUT ONTO  
THE WATER, YOU  
WOULD HAVE  
A CHANCE.



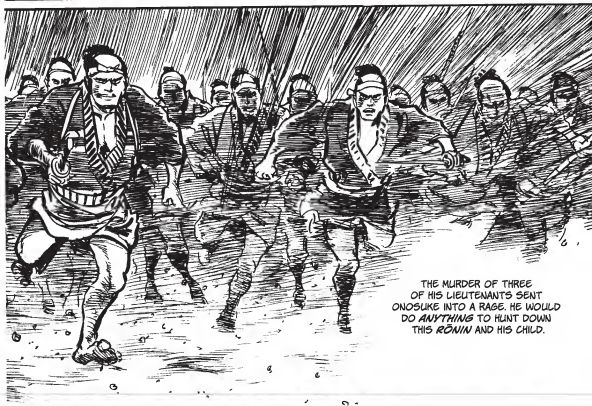
HAH?!

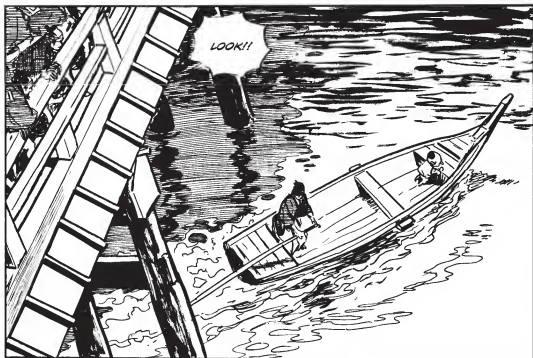
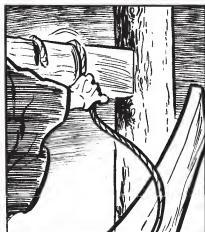














DOWN  
THERE! IT'S  
HIM, BY GOD!  
THAT'S  
HIM!



WHAT?!

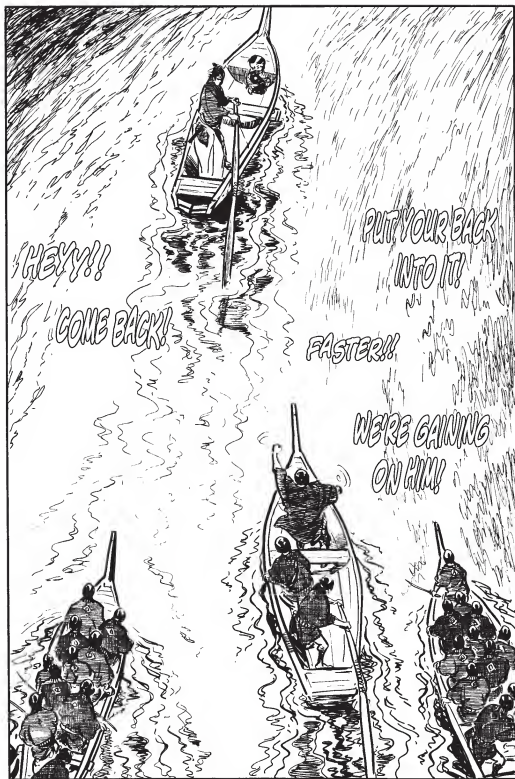
RRG!!



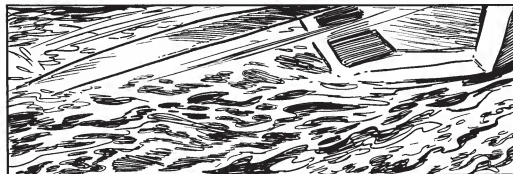
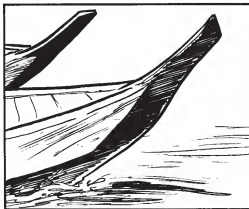
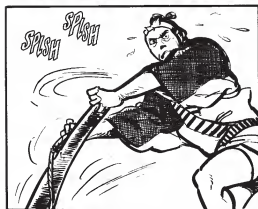
BOATS,  
DAMN IT! GET  
BOATS!

DON'T  
LET HIM  
GET  
AWAY!

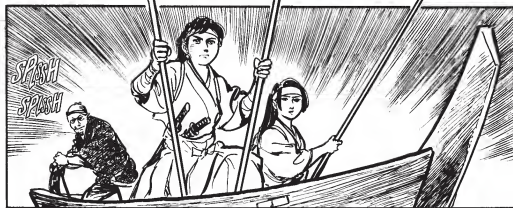


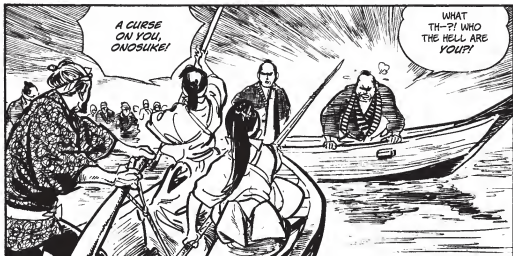




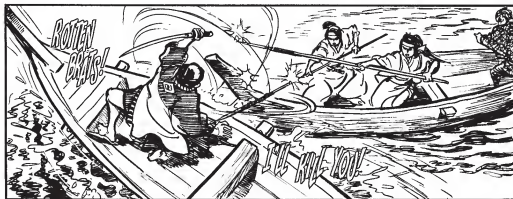
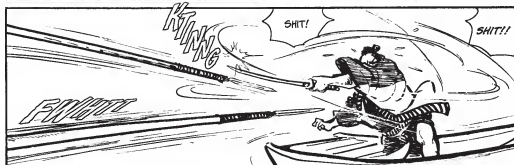












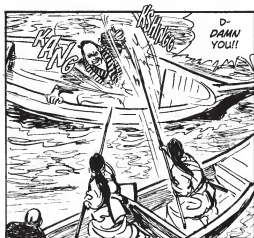


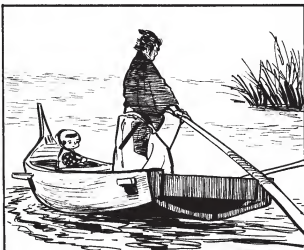
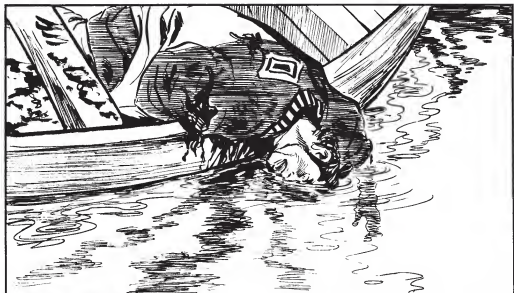


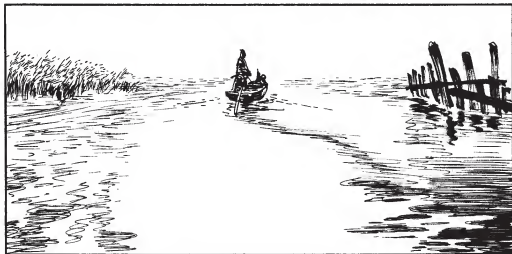














*the twenty-second*



# Pasting Frost



PERHAPS IT HAD BEEN BUILT BY SOME  
LOCAL HAND, WISTFUL FOR A PLACE TO  
CATCH A FLEETING MOMENT'S REST.  
HERE, IN THIS CRUMBLING OPEN HUT  
ATOP A LOW HILL THAT MIGHT ONCE HAVE  
BEEN A MIGHTY CASTLE'S BATTLEMENTS,  
THE CHILD WATCHED THE FALLING RAIN.



WITH EVERY DOWNPOUR,  
THE FOOTSTEPS OF SPRING  
DROVE AWAY THE TOO-LONG  
WINTER. AND YET...



...TO THIS CHILD'S  
HEART, THE RAIN  
WAS ICE AGAINST  
HIS SKIN.



STILL...



BE IT COLD, OR  
HUNGER, OR SIMPLE  
LONELINESS...



HE WAS A CHILD  
ALL TOO USED  
TO SUFFERING.  
*DESTINY'S*  
CHILD.

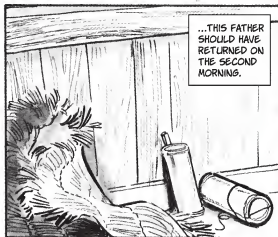




ACCUSTOMED AS  
WELL TO WAITING  
FOR HIS FATHER.



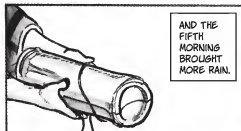
YET THIS TIME...



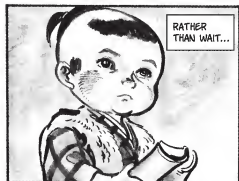
...THIS FATHER  
SHOULD HAVE  
RETURNED ON  
THE SECOND  
MORNING.



A THIRD DAY  
DAWNED. DUSK  
CLOSED IN  
OVER YET A  
FOURTH.



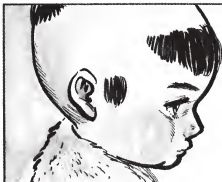
AND THE  
FIFTH  
MORNING  
BROUGHT  
MORE RAIN.



RATHER  
THAN WAIT...



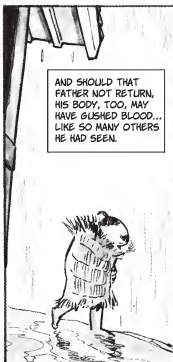
RATHER THAN  
FALL TO  
HUNGER,  
ENDLESSLY  
WAITING...



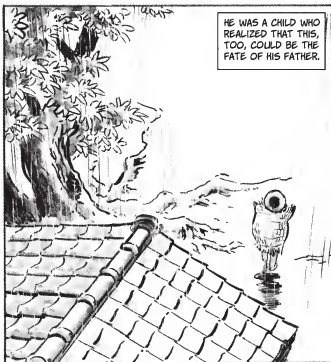
THE CHILD RESOLVED TO  
SEEK OUT HIS FATHER. HIS  
HEART, THIS CHILD'S HEART,  
WAS DAUNTLESS STILL.



HE WAS A CHILD  
WHO KNEW HIS  
FATHER LIVED  
IN THE HEAT OF  
BATTLE, AND  
THAT WAS WHY  
HE SO OFTEN  
WENT AWAY.

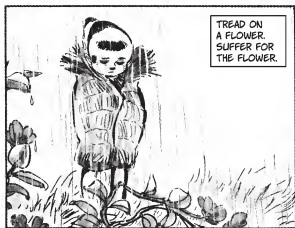
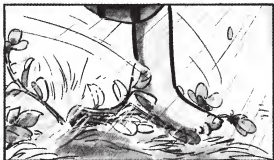
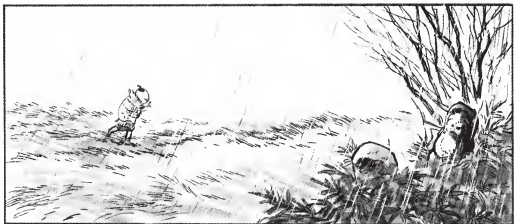


AND SHOULD THAT  
FATHER NOT RETURN,  
HIS BODY, TOO, MAY  
HAVE GUSHED BLOOD...  
LIKE SO MANY OTHERS  
HE HAD SEEN.



HE WAS A CHILD WHO  
REALIZED THAT THIS,  
TOO, COULD BE THE  
FATE OF HIS FATHER.





TREAD ON  
A FLOWER.  
SUFFER FOR  
THE FLOWER.



A CHILD'S  
SPRING.



KNOWING THE  
FOOLISHNESS  
OF ASKING  
STRANGERS  
WHERE HIS  
FATHER  
HAD GONE...



...HE WAS A  
CHILD WHO  
KNEW THAT  
IF HE WAS TO  
SEARCH, HE  
MUST SEARCH  
ALONE.

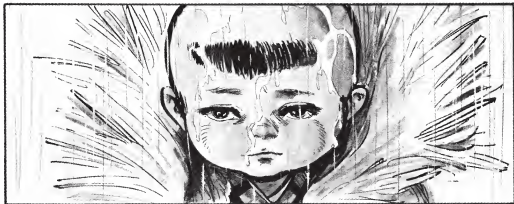
KNOWING  
NO TEARS.

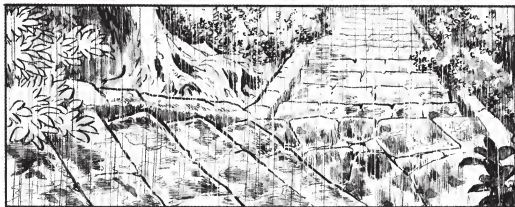
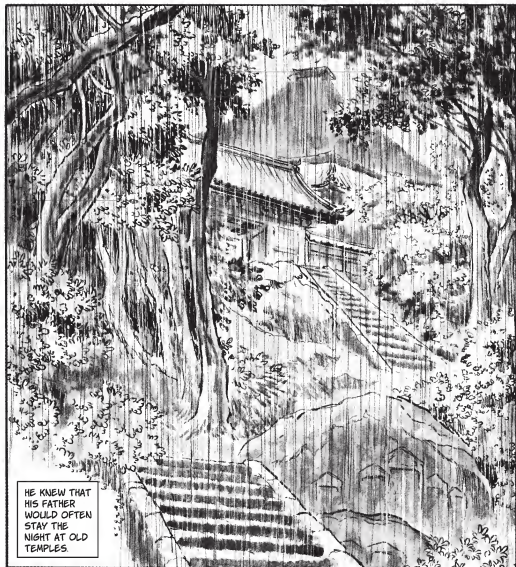


SPEAKING  
NO WORDS.

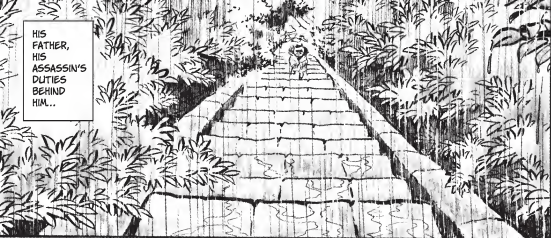


A CHILD  
ALONE.





HIS  
FATHER,  
HIS  
ASSASSIN'S  
DUTIES  
BEHIND  
HIM...



...ALWAYS  
CAME TO  
THE  
TEMPLES...



AND SAT  
BEFORE THE  
BUDDHA. THIS  
HE KNEW.



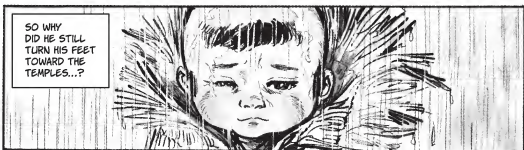
AND YET...  
HIS FATHER  
HAD KILLED  
THE BUDDHA.



THE  
CHILD HAD  
SEEN HIM  
DO IT.

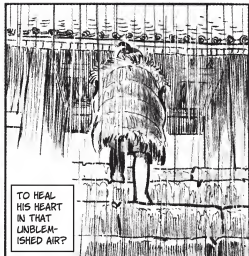


SO WHY  
DID HE STILL  
TURN HIS FEET  
TOWARD THE  
TEMPLES...?





TO TALK  
WITH THE  
CHILD'S  
DEAD  
MOTHER?



TO HEAL  
HIS HEART  
IN THAT  
UNBLEM-  
ISHED AIR?

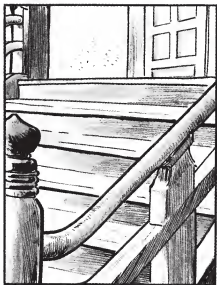


THE  
CHILD  
NEEDED  
NO SUCH  
REASONS.

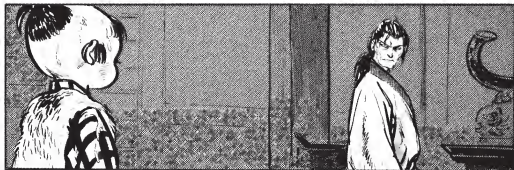


HE LONGED  
ONLY TO  
GLIMPSE  
HIS FATHER  
ON THESE  
ANCIENT  
TEMPLE  
GROUNDS.



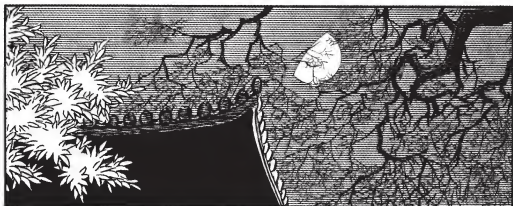
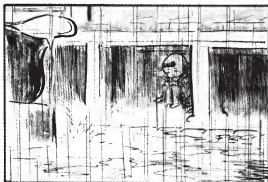


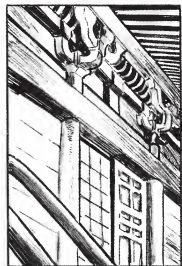
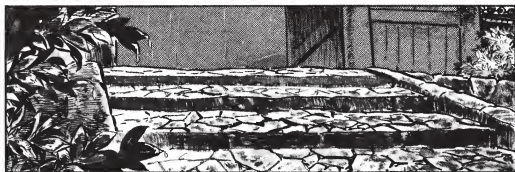


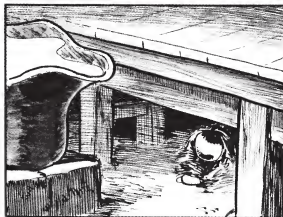
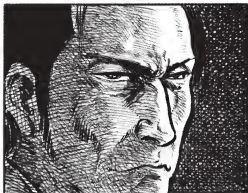




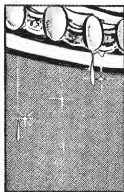
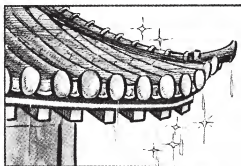
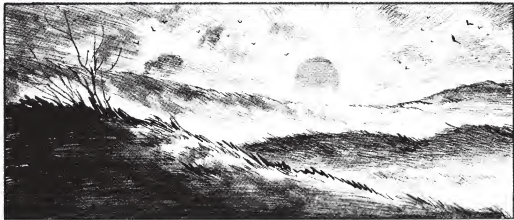
BUT FINALLY,  
AT THIS LAST  
OF MANY  
TEMPLES,  
EXHAUSTED  
BY COLD AND  
HUNGER, HE  
COULD GO  
NO FURTHER.

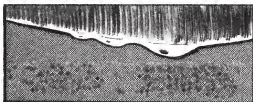




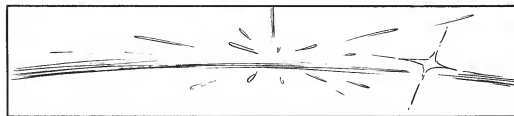
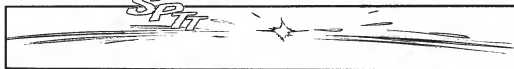
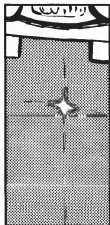


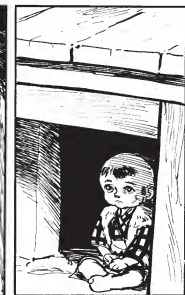


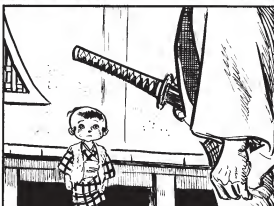
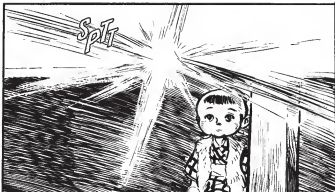


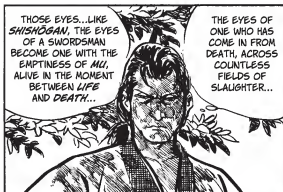












THOSE EYES...LIKE  
*SHISHOGAN*, THE EYES  
OF A SWORDSMAN  
BECOME ONE WITH THE  
EMPTYNESS OF *MU*,  
ALIVE IN THE MOMENT  
BETWEEN LIFE  
AND DEATH...

THE EYES OF  
ONE WHO HAS  
COME IN FROM  
DEATH, ACROSS  
COUNTLESS  
FIELDS OF  
SLAUGHTER...



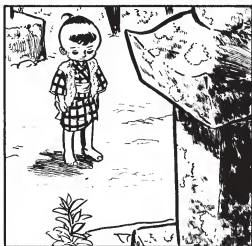
BUT IN  
A LITTLE  
*CHILD*...?  
NO—THIS  
CANNOT BE.

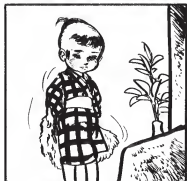
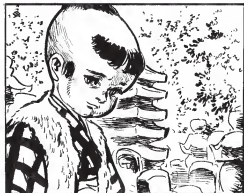


IT  
MAKES NO  
SENSE!



ARE MY EYES  
SO DULL THEY  
CAN'T TELL  
*SHISHOGAN*  
WHEN THEY  
SEE IT?

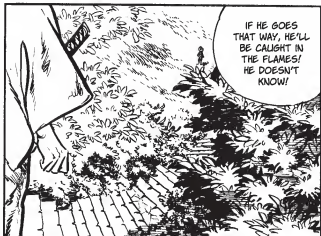
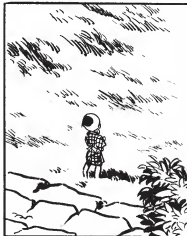




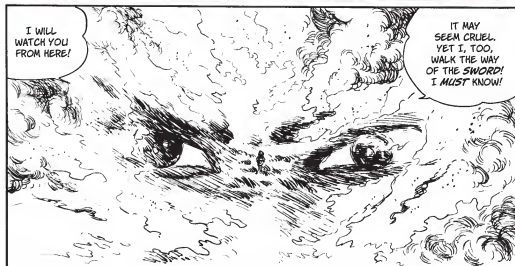




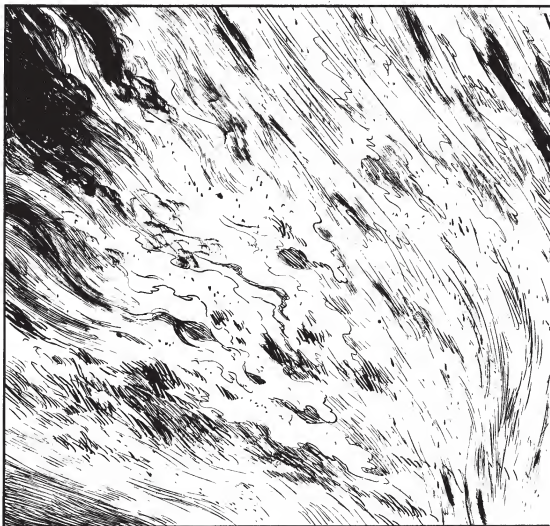
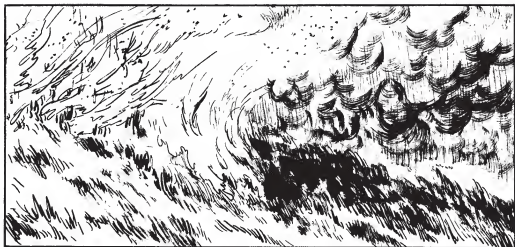




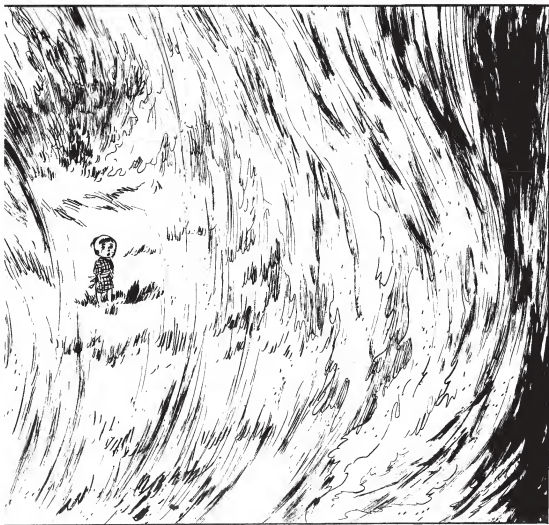












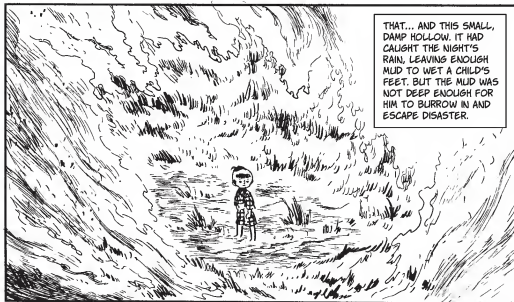


THE CHILD KNEW  
HIS FATHER HAD ONCE  
PILED GRAVESTONES  
TOGETHER FOR  
SHELTER TO SURVIVE  
A RAGING FIRE.

BUT HERE  
THERE WERE NO  
GRAVESTONES,  
NO STONES AT ALL.  
ONLY THE WAVING  
DRIED GRASSES  
OF FIELDS READY  
FOR BURNING.



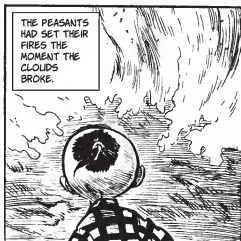
THAT... AND THIS SMALL,  
DAMP HOLLOW. IT HAD  
CAUGHT THE NIGHT'S  
RAIN, LEAVING ENOUGH  
MUD TO WET A CHILD'S  
FEET. BUT THE MUD WAS  
NOT DEEP ENOUGH FOR  
HIM TO BURROW IN AND  
ESCAPE DISASTER.



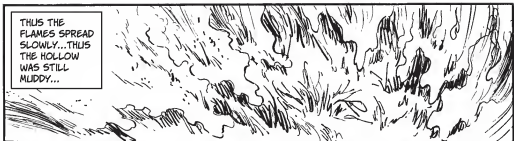
NOT WANTING  
TO LET THEIR  
PLANTING SLIP  
FURTHER AFTER  
WEEKS OF  
HEAVY RAINS...



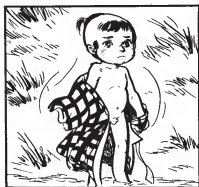
THE PEASANTS  
HAD SET THEIR  
FIRES THE  
MOMENT THE  
CLOUDS  
BROKE.



THUS THE  
FLAMES SPREAD  
SLOWLY...THUS  
THE HOLLOW  
WAS STILL  
MUDDY...



...AND THUS  
PERHAPS  
THE BOY  
COULD  
SAVE HIS  
LIFE.







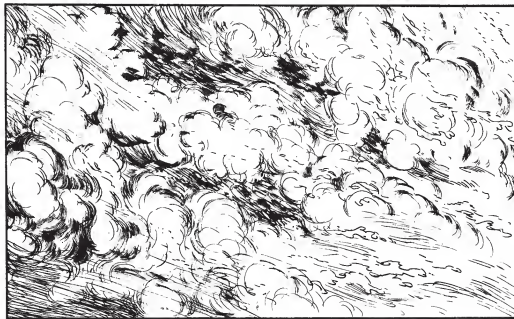
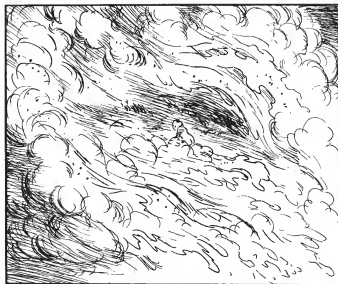
A SIMPLE,  
ELEGANT  
ANSWER.

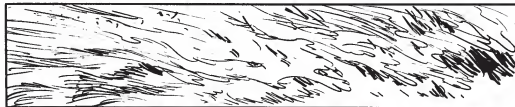


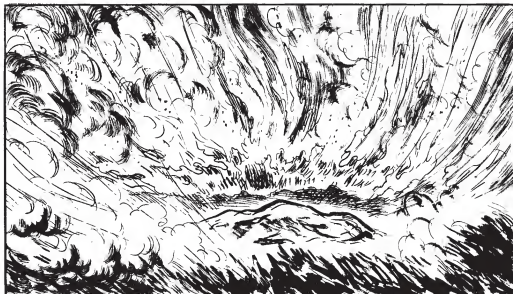
YET HOW  
MANY ADULTS,  
FACING THAT  
ADVANCING  
WALL OF DEATH,  
WOULD HAVE  
THOUGHT  
OF IT?









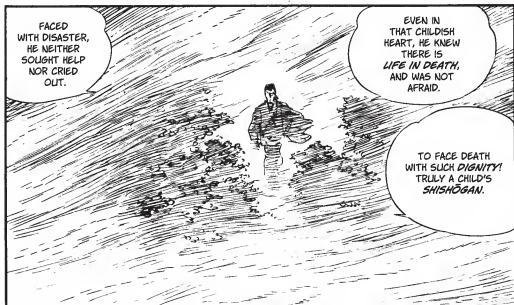


YET  
ANOTHER  
FORTUITOUS  
CHANCE—THE  
BREEZE THAT  
NOW SPRANG  
UP DISPERSED  
THE SMOKE BE-  
FORE IT COULD  
SETTLE IN THE  
HOLLOW.



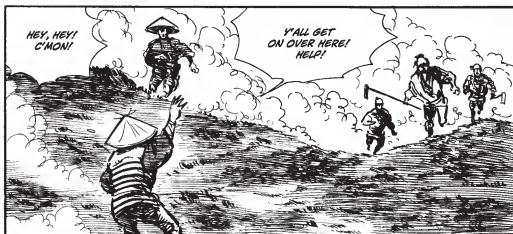
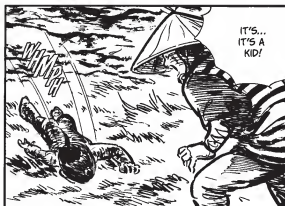
TRULY HE  
WAS A CHILD  
SWADDLED  
IN GOOD  
FORTUNE.



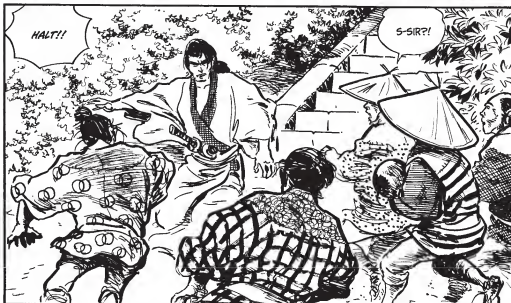














THAT  
BOY!  
WHERE—  
?!

HE WAS  
CAUGHT IN THE  
FIELD BURNIN',  
HE WAS! DUG  
HISSELF INTO  
THE MUD!



AND  
IS HE  
ALIVE?!



HE SHORE IS,  
SIR! DIDN'T CHOKE  
ON NO SMOKE,  
AIN'T EVEN BURN'T!  
IT'S A MIRACLE!

IS HE  
YER BOY,  
MISTER  
SAMURAI,  
SIR?



....  
....  
NO.

THEN  
LET US  
THROUGH!



THE POOR  
LITTLE TYKE'S  
BARELY BREATHIN',  
YER HONOR!

WE GOTTA  
WASH HIM CLEAN  
AND FIX HIM UP  
QUICK!



LORDY,  
HE MUSTA  
BEEN SCARED  
TO DEATH.

BUT HE'S  
A LUCKY LAD,  
HE IS! HE'S  
LUCKY TO BE  
ALIVE!



"LUCKY"...?  
YOU THINK IT  
WAS LUCK THAT  
SAVED HIM?  
FOOL!!





IT'S TRUE!  
SHISHŌGAN! EYES THAT  
ONLY A SWORDSMAN WHO HAS  
CUT THROUGH DEATH ITSELF,  
WHO WAS WALKED THROUGH THE  
SPATTERING BLOOD OF  
COUNTLESS SLAUGHTERS,  
CAN POSSESS!!



EYES THAT  
EVEN I, WHOSE  
SWORD HAS DEALT  
DEATH BEYOND  
COUNTING, MAY  
NEVER ATTAIN!

HOW HAS  
THIS CHILD  
PERFECTED  
SUCH SPIRIT?!



I MUST  
FIND OUT!

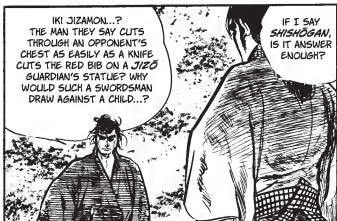


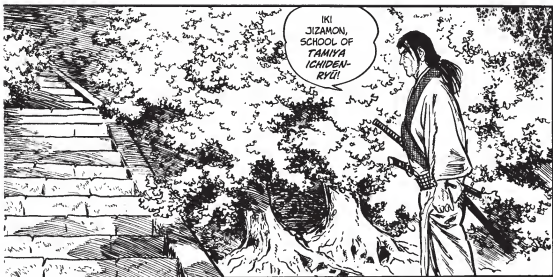


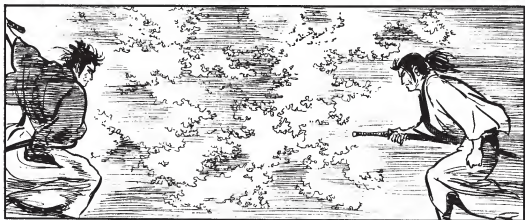
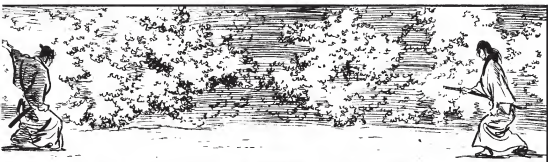






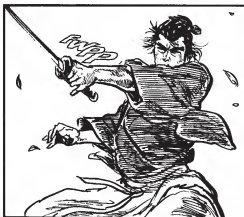
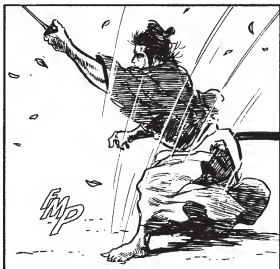






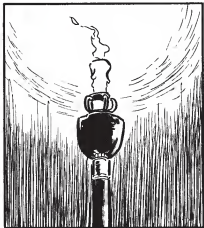


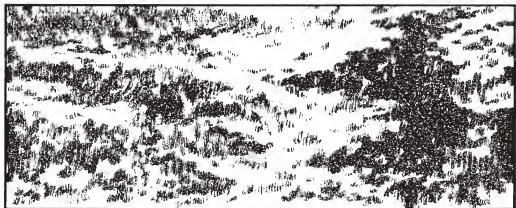
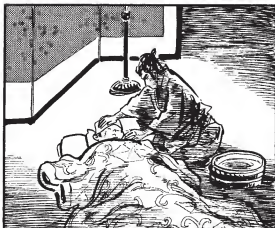
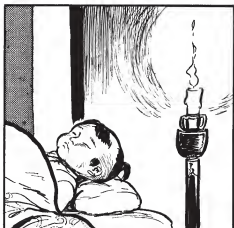














THE LAST FROST HAD COME, DUSTING THE BLACKENED FIELDS IN WHITE. WITH THIS PARTING FROST, THE SEASONS NOW TURNED TOWARD THE NEW-BORN GREEN OF SPRING.

BUT FOR A FATHER AND CHILD WITH NO TOMORROW, WHAT DESTINY LAY AHEAD...?



*the twenty-third*



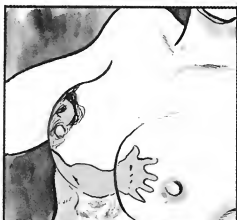
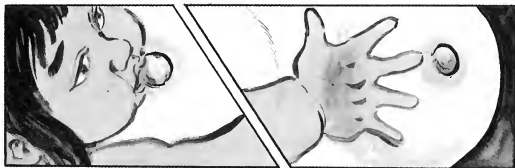
# Performer









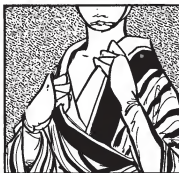


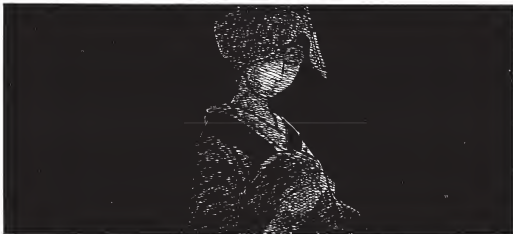












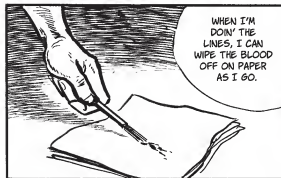
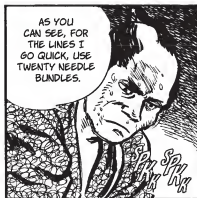


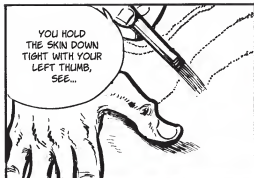
AH! OHH...! NNGNN...! UNNG...!

SPK<sub>K</sub> SPK<sub>K</sub> SPK<sub>K</sub> SPK<sub>K</sub>  
SPK<sub>K</sub>









"YESSIR... THAT'S LINOKICHI! THE TATTOO GUY'S HOUSE RIGHT OVER THERE. HE THINK'S HE'S SOME BIG-SHOT ARTIST OR SOMETHING... WEIRD OLD COOT. IT TAKES FOREVER TO GET ANYTHING OUT OF HIM.

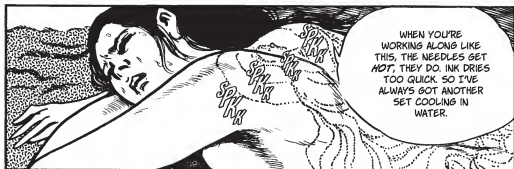


"FIRST YOU GOTTA LISTEN  
TO THE SAME OLD LECTURE, MORE'N  
YOU WANT TO KNOW ABOUT TATTOOS,  
SEE? THEN YOU CAN ASK YER QUESTIONS.  
JUST DON'T INTERRUPT HIM BEFORE  
HE'S DONE, OR HE'LL SHUT  
UP LIKE A CLAM!"

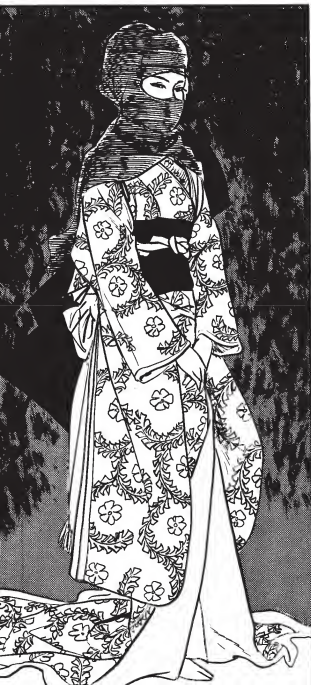




THE WAY  
PEOPLE FEEL  
STUFF... COLD,  
HEAT, PAIN...  
NOW *THAT'S*  
AN AMAZING  
THING.

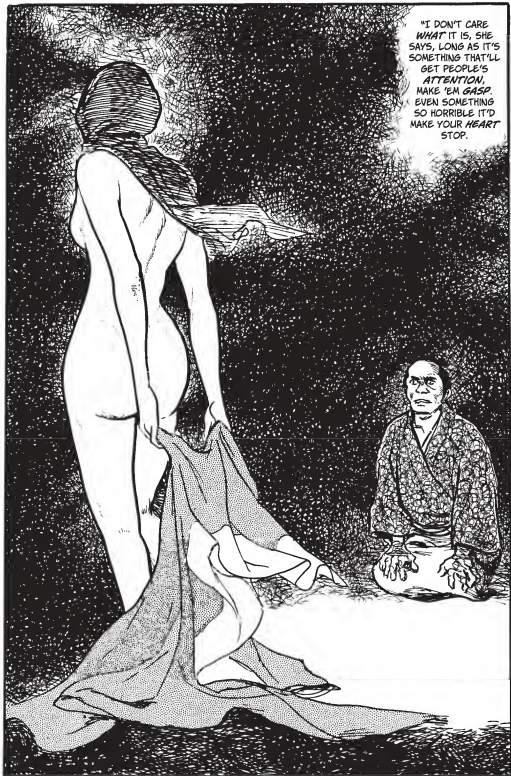








"I DON'T CARE  
WHAT IT IS, SHE  
SAYS, LONG AS IT'S  
SOMETHING THAT'LL  
GET PEOPLE'S  
ATTENTION,  
MAKE 'EM GASP.  
EVEN SOMETHING  
SO HORRIBLE IT'D  
MAKE YOUR HEART  
STOP.

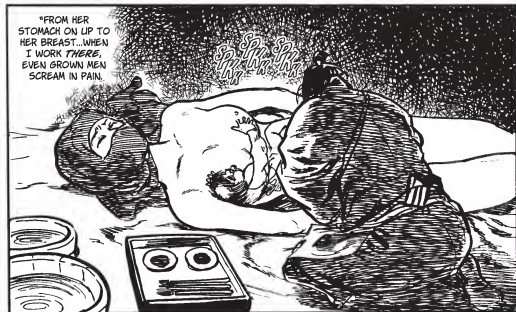


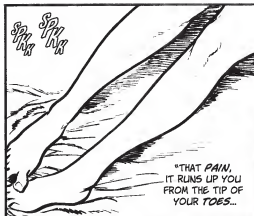




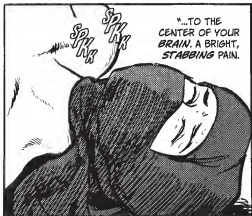
\*OR MAYBE  
SOMETHING TO DRIVE  
MEN MAD WITH *LUST*.  
*ANYTHING...*  
GIVE ME THE MOST  
*SHOCKING* TATTOO  
YOU CAN!



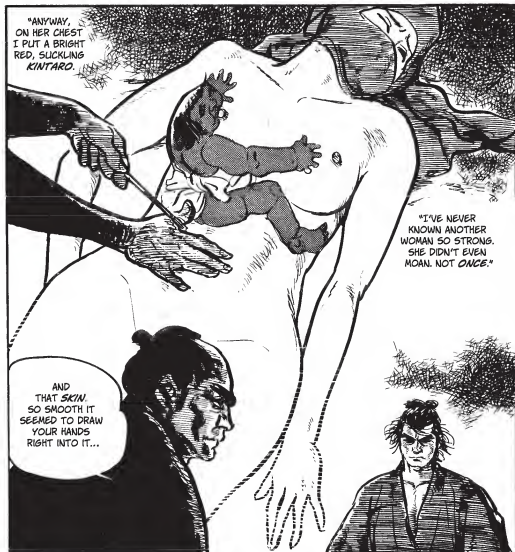




"THAT PAIN,  
IT RUNS UP YOU  
FROM THE TIP OF  
YOUR TOES..."



"...TO THE  
CENTER OF YOUR  
BRAIN. A BRIGHT,  
STABBING PAIN."



"ANYWAY,  
ON HER CHEST  
I PUT A BRIGHT  
RED, SUCKLING  
KINTARO."

"I'VE NEVER  
KNOWN ANOTHER  
WOMAN SO STRONG.  
SHE DIDN'T EVEN  
MOAN. NOT ONCE."

AND  
THAT SKIN.  
SO SMOOTH IT  
SEEMED TO DRAW  
YOUR HANDS  
RIGHT INTO IT...



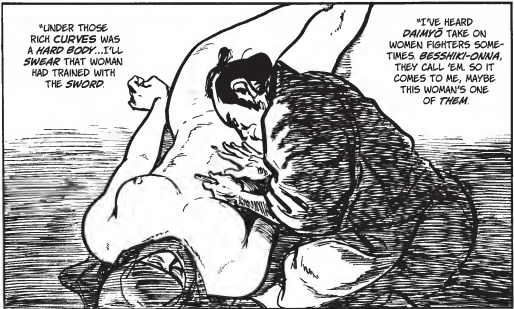
BUT AS I  
WAS WORKING,  
I NOTICED  
SOMETHING!



"FIRST I'D  
THOUGHT  
MAYBE SHE  
WAS A DANCER,  
BUT I WAS  
WRONG.



"SHE HAD  
MUSCLES, BUT  
HARD MUSCLES,  
LIKE SHE'D DONE  
MARTIAL ARTS.



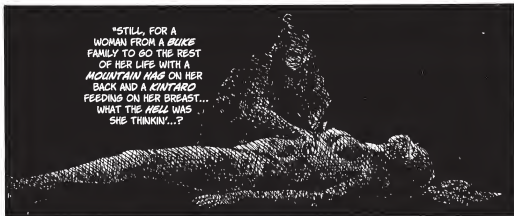
"UNDER THOSE  
RICH CURVES  
WAS A  
HARD BODY...I'LL  
SWEAR THAT WOMAN  
HAD TRAINED WITH  
THE SWORD.

"I'VE HEARD  
DAIMYŌ TAKE ON  
WOMEN FIGHTERS SOME-  
TIMES. BESSHIKI-ONNA,  
THEY CALL 'EM. SO IT  
COMES TO ME, MAYBE  
THIS WOMAN'S ONE  
OF THEM.

"MAYBE  
THAT'S WHY  
SHE'D NEVER  
SHOW HER  
FACE.

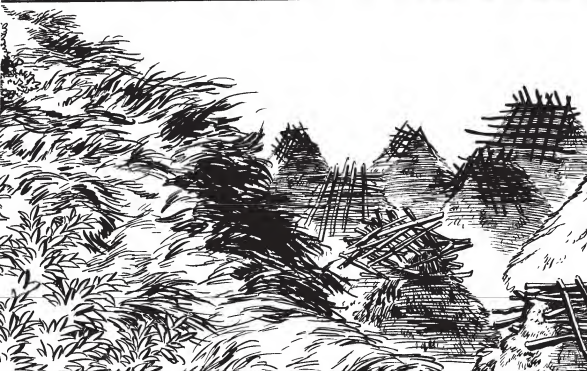


"STILL, FOR A  
WOMAN FROM A *BUKE*  
FAMILY TO GO THE REST  
OF HER LIFE WITH A  
*MOUNTAIN* HAS ON HER  
BACK AND A *KINTARO*  
FEEDING ON HER BREAST...  
WHAT THE HELL WAS  
SHE THINKIN'...?"

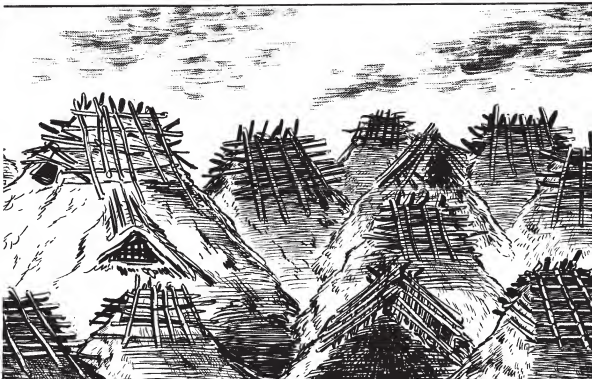
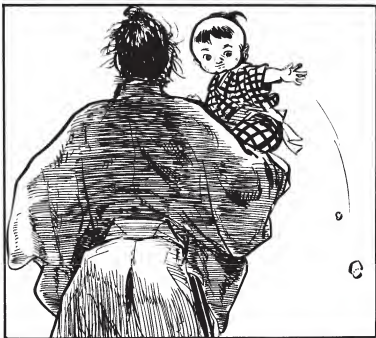


"THAT TATTOO  
WAS A MASTERPIECE,  
MEBBE THE BEST OF MY  
LIFE! BUT I'VE WORRIED  
EVER SINCE THAT I  
DID HER WRONG..."





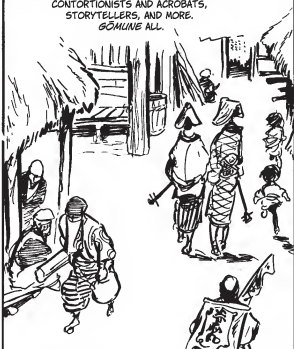




IN THE MID-EDO PERIOD, ALL ARTISTS WHO MADE THEIR LIVING PERFORMING ON THE STREET WE'RE CALLED *GŌMUNE*.



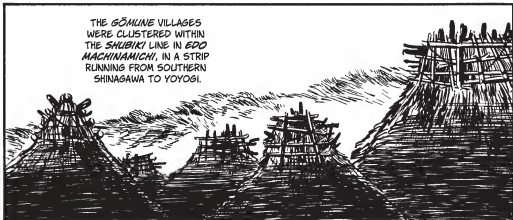
WOMEN MINSTRELS, SLEIGHT-OF-HANDS, STREET-CORNER *NO* DANCERS, STREET-SIDE *KABUKI* PERFORMERS, DRUM DANCERS, SNAKE-OIL SALESMEN, TRAVELING PLAYERS, STREET-CORNER PUPPET PLAYS, STREET PREACHERS, CONTORTIONISTS AND ACROBATS, STORYTELLERS, AND MORE.  
*GŌMUNE* ALL.



THEY WERE CONTROLLED BY THE *GŌMUNE JINDAYŪ*, AND CARRIED A *GŌMUNE* LICENSE AUTHORIZING THEM TO TAKE MONEY FROM THE CROWDS.



THE GÔMUNE VILLAGES  
WERE CLUSTERED WITHIN  
THE SHUBIKI LINE IN EDO  
MACHINAMICHI, IN A STRIP  
RUNNING FROM SOUTHERN  
SHINAGAWA TO YOYOSI.











RUN HIM  
THROUGH!

SNUFF HIM!



BUT UNO  
COULDN'T HAVE  
SENT THE BASTARD  
TO US...

YEAH, MAYBE NOT.  
BUT IF HE'S LOOKING  
FOR HER HERE,  
HE'S GOTTA KNOW  
THE STORY!

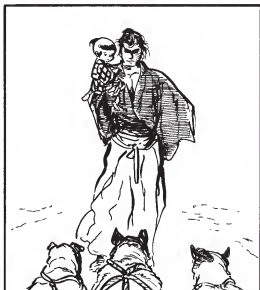


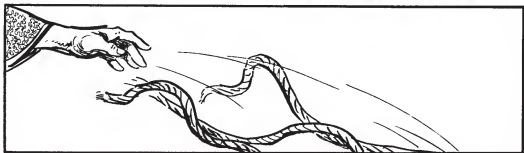
WE'RE NOT  
LETTING SOME  
BOOTLICKING HIRED  
ASSASSIN FOR  
TENDŌ HAN KILL  
OUR O-YUKI!

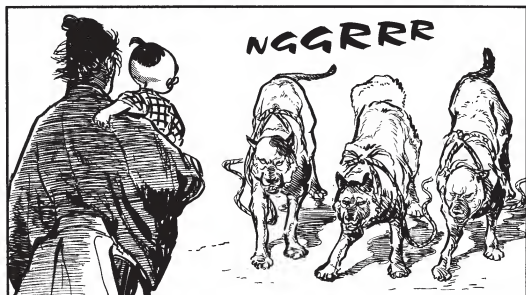
KILL HIM! NOW!!

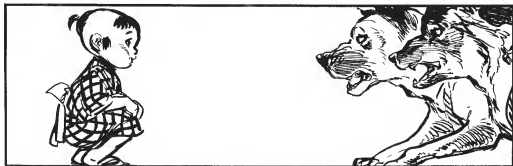
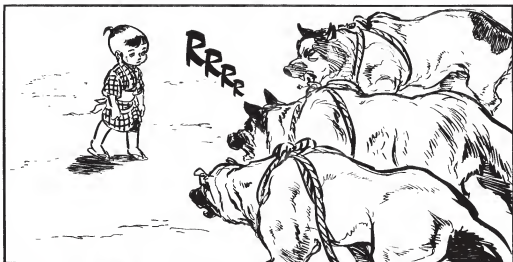








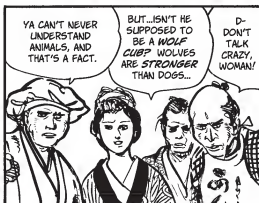
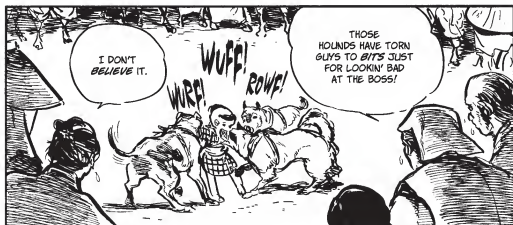






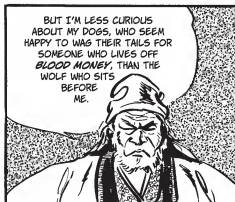








BUT IF  
THE HOUNDS  
ARE WILLING, HOW  
CAN THE MASTER  
REFUSE?



BUT I'M LESS CURIOUS  
ABOUT MY DOGS, WHO SEEM  
HAPPY TO WAG THEIR TAILS FOR  
SOMEONE WHO LIVES OFF  
**BLOOD MONEY**, THAN THE  
WOLF WHO SITS  
BEFORE  
ME.

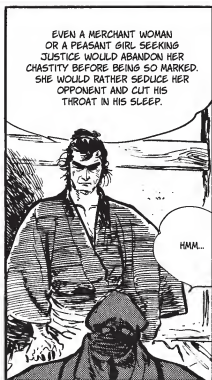


I'M LOOKING  
FOR A WOMAN I  
SUSPECT WAS ONE  
OF YOUR PEOPLE. A  
WOMAN NAMED  
**O-YUKI**.



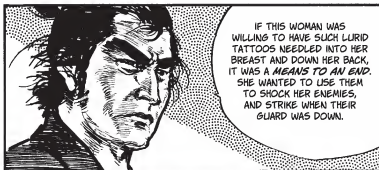
I UNDERSTAND  
YOU'VE BEEN TO THE  
TATTOO MASTER. BUT HE  
SHOULD KNOW NOTHING OF  
O-YUKI'S PAST. HOW DID YOU  
DEDUCE SHE WAS  
**GÔMUNE**...?

A WOMAN  
OF THE **BUKE**  
WOULD NEVER  
ALLOW HER  
BODY TO BE  
TATTOOED.



EVEN A MERCHANT WOMAN  
OR A PEASANT GIRL SEEKING  
JUSTICE WOULD ABANDON HER  
CHASTITY BEFORE BEING SO MARKED.  
SHE WOULD RATHER SEDUCE HER  
OPPONENT AND CUT HIS  
THROAT IN HIS SLEEP.

HMM...



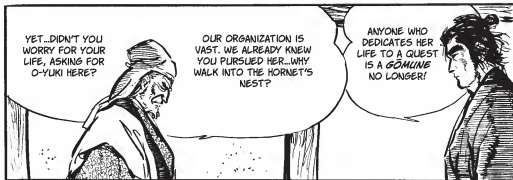
IF THIS WOMAN WAS WILLING TO HAVE SUCH LURID TATTOOS NEEDLED INTO HER BREAST AND DOWN HER BACK, IT WAS A MEANS TO AN END. SHE WANTED TO USE THEM TO SHOCK HER ENEMIES, AND STRIKE WHEN THEIR GUARD WAS DOWN.



WHAT KIND OF WOMAN WOULD THINK OF SUCH A STRATEGY? ONLY SOMEONE WHO DEDICATED HER WHOLE LIFE TO PERFORMANCE. IT HAD TO BE THE INSIGHT OF THE GÔMUNE.

INDEED. IT IS AS YOU SAY.

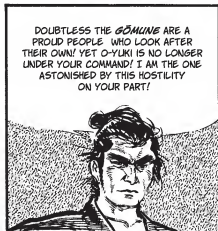
YOUR LOGIC IS WITHOUT FLAW.



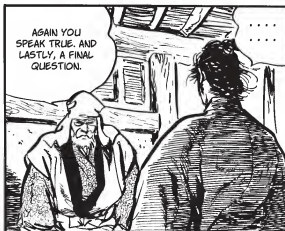
YET...DIDN'T YOU WORRY FOR YOUR LIFE, ASKING FOR O-YUKI HERE?

OUR ORGANIZATION IS VAST. WE ALREADY KNEW YOU PURSUED HER...WHY WALK INTO THE HORNET'S NEST?

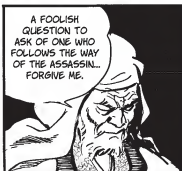
ANYONE WHO DEDICATES HER LIFE TO A QUEST IS A GÔMUNE NO LONGER!



DOUBTLESS THE GÔMUNE ARE A PROUD PEOPLE WHO LOOK AFTER THEIR OWN! YET O-YUKI IS NO LONGER UNDER YOUR COMMAND! I AM THE ONE ASTONISHED BY THIS HOSTILITY ON YOUR PART!

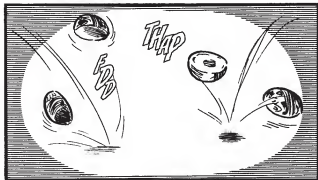
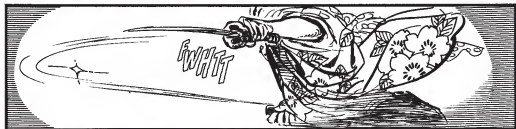


AGAIN YOU SPEAK TRUE. AND LASTLY, A FINAL QUESTION.

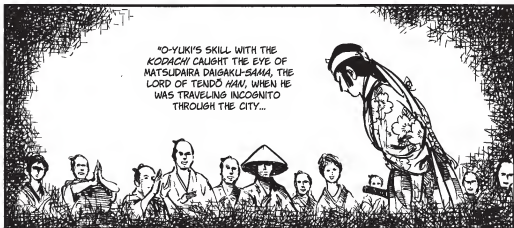
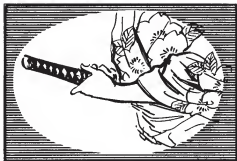
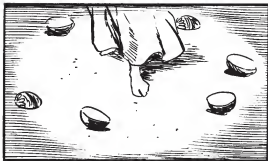


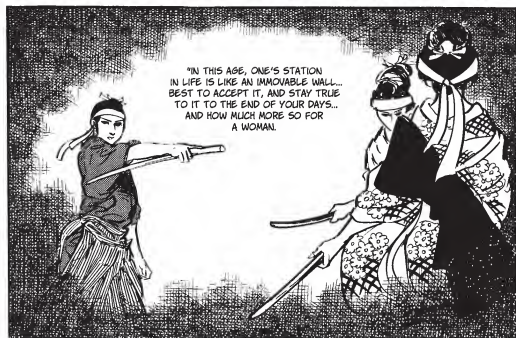


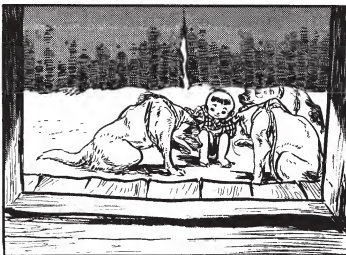
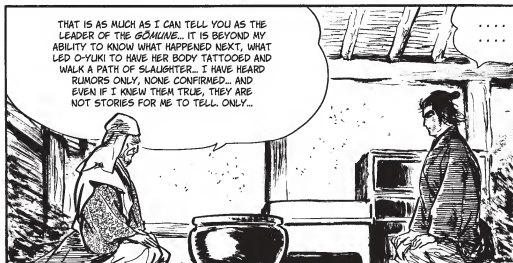
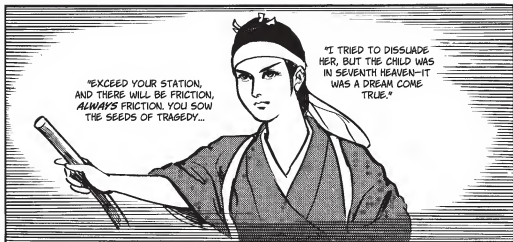




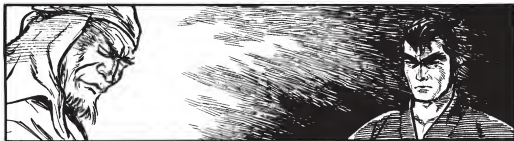
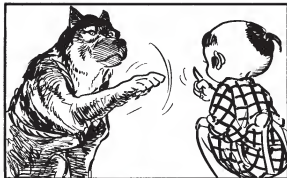












ON THE OSHŪ BYWAY, JUST THIS SIDE OF TENDŌ KAN, THERE IS A HOT SPRING CALLED TSUTA-NO-YU. THOSE WHO WISH TO SUCCEED ON A QUEST MUST PURIFY THEMSELVES IN THOSE WATERS FOR SEVEN DAYS AND SEVEN NIGHTS BEFORE THEY CAN PRAY AT THE YUKA MEIJIN SHRINE.



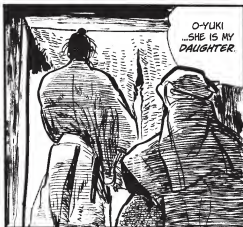
IF YOU, TOO, ARE ON A QUEST, IT IS WELL THAT YOU GO THERE.



MY THANKS...

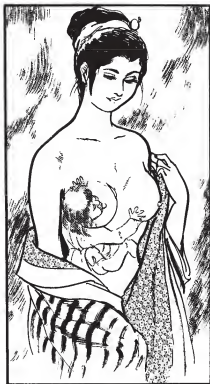


O-YUKI... SHE IS MY DAUGHTER.







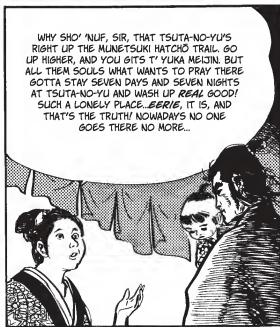




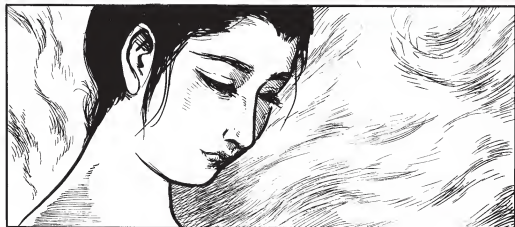


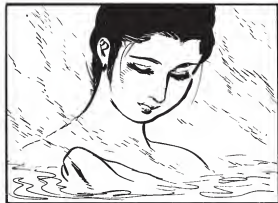


WHY SHO' 'NUF, SIR, THAT TSUTA-NO-YU'S  
RIGHT UP THE MUNETSUKI HATCHO TRAIL. GO  
UP HIGHER, AND YOU GITS T' YUKA MEIJIN. BUT  
ALL THEM SOULS WHAT WANTS TO PRAY THERE  
GOTTA STAY SEVEN DAYS AND SEVEN NIGHTS  
AT TSUTA-NO-YU AND WASH UP *REAL* GOOD!  
SUCH A LONELY PLACE...*EEIEEE*, IT IS, AND  
THAT'S THE TRUTH! NOWADAYS NO ONE  
GOES THERE NO MORE...













I DON'T KNOW HOW  
MUCH OF A *BESSHIKI-  
ONNA* YOU ARE, BUT  
I KNOW YOU'RE A  
*FOOL* TO CHALLENGE  
ME!



HEH HEH  
HEH...  
A NIGHT  
DUEL WITH  
*KOZUKA ENKI?*  
TO THIS DAY, I  
HAVE NEVER BEEN  
DEFEATED!



HEH  
HEH HEH...

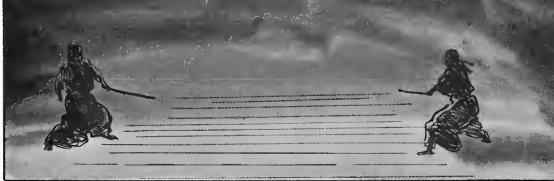
I'D HEARD YOU  
BESSHIKI-ONNA WERE  
MORE MUSCLE-BOUND  
THAN MEN, GROTESQUE  
MONSTROSITIES,  
SCARCELY FEMALE.

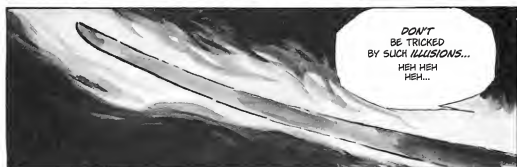
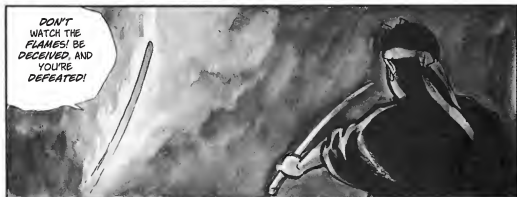
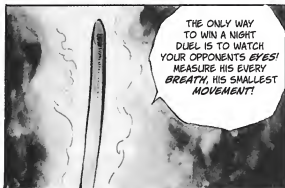
BUT NOT  
YOU! NO, YOU'RE  
A SPECIAL WOMAN.  
AN EXCEPTIONAL  
WOMAN, A TRUE  
BEAUTY!

HEH HEH  
HEH...

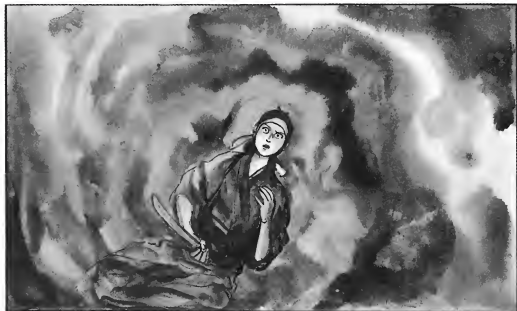


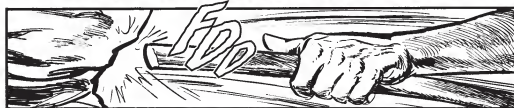












NNG...!



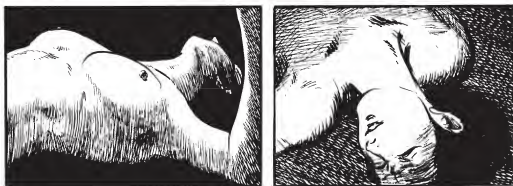
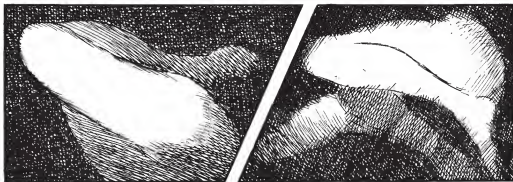


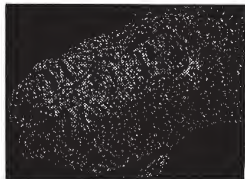
A BEAUTY  
LIKE YOU IS  
WASTED AS  
A BESSHIKI-  
ONNA...  
HEH HEH...

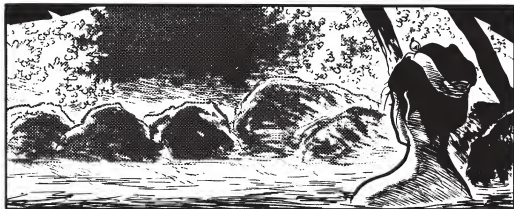
THE ONLY  
WOMEN WHO NEED  
SWORDS ARE WOMEN  
TOO UGLY TO  
CATCH A MAN!  
MWAH HAH HAH  
HAH HAH!

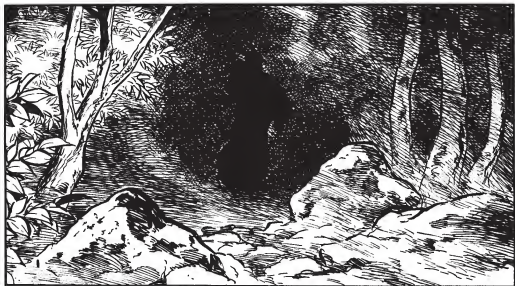




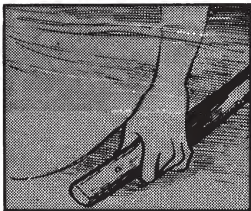
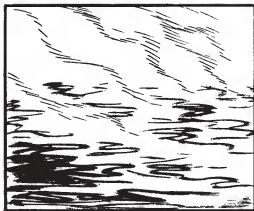
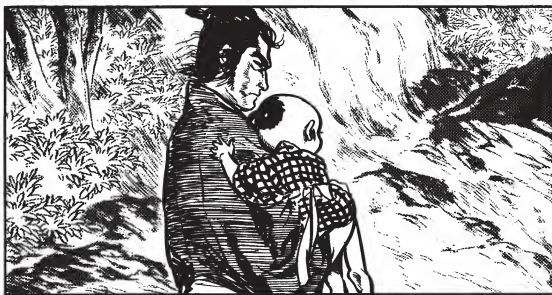








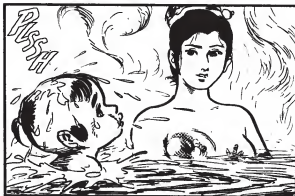
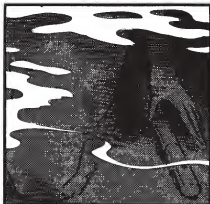


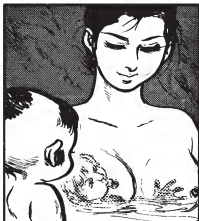








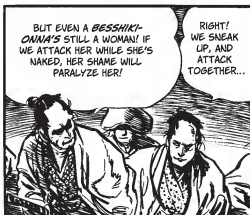






WITH  
A BIT OF  
LUCK, WE'LL  
CATCH HER  
BATHING!

SHE MAY  
BE FEMALE,  
BUT SHE'S STILL  
DEADLY—SHE  
KILLED SHIMA-  
GAMI AND  
ALL HIS  
MEN!



BUT EVEN A *BESSHIKI-  
ONNA*'S STILL A WOMAN! IF  
WE ATTACK HER WHILE SHE'S  
NAKED, HER SHAME WILL  
PARALYZE HER!

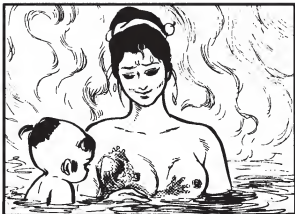
RIGHT!  
WE SNEAK  
UP, AND  
ATTACK  
TOGETHER...



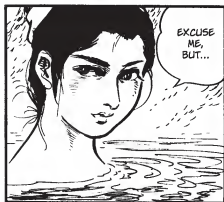
HEY...THE GIRL  
AT THE INN SAID  
SOME *RONIN* TOOK  
HIS KID UP HERE,  
TOO.

TOO  
BAD! IF HE  
INTERFERES,  
CUT HIM  
DOWN!





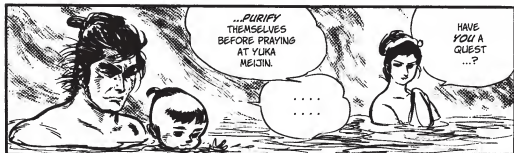
THE  
BOY NEVER  
KNEW HIS MOTHER.  
PLEASE FORGIVE  
HIM.



EXCUSE  
ME,  
BUT...



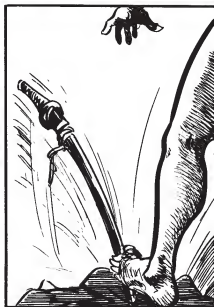
...TSUTA-NO-YU  
IS A PLACE WHERE  
THOSE WHO WISH TO  
PRAY FOR SUCCESS  
IN A QUEST...

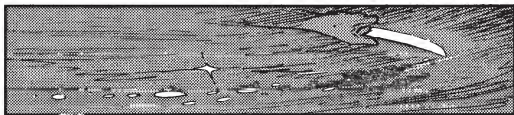


...PURIFY  
THEMSELVES  
BEFORE PRAYING  
AT YUKA  
MEIJIN.

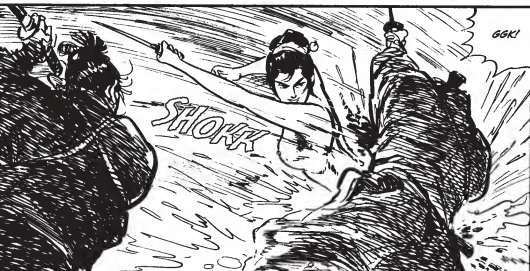
HAVE  
YOU A  
QUEST  
...?

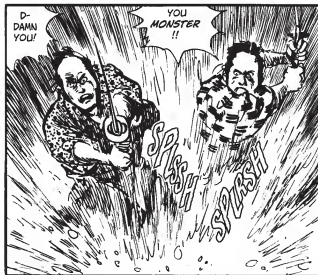




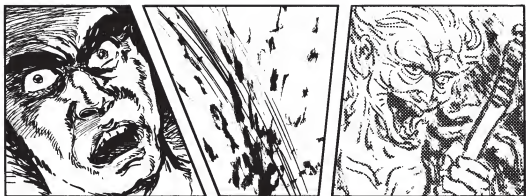




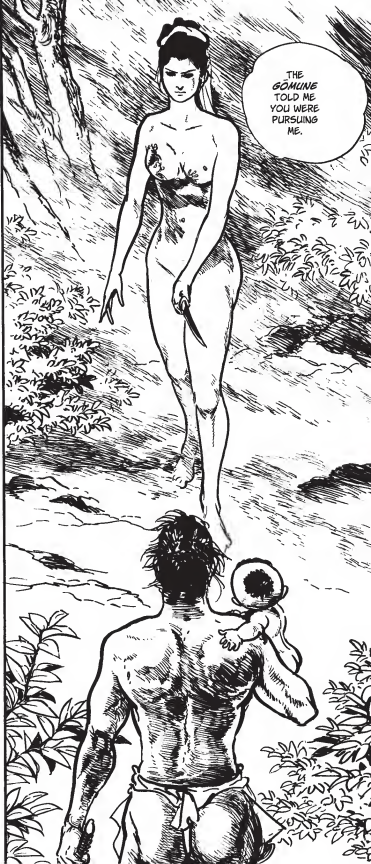


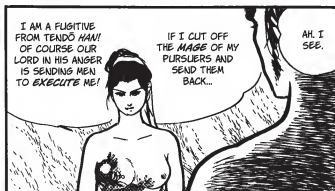


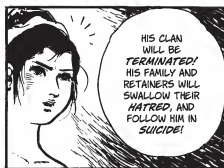
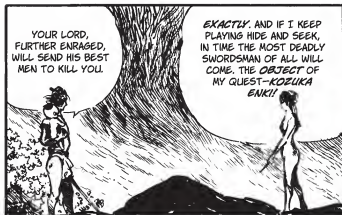




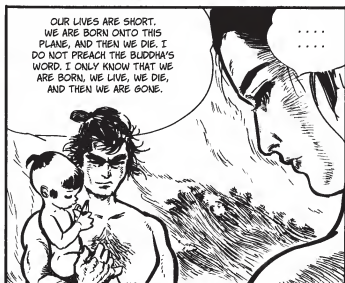
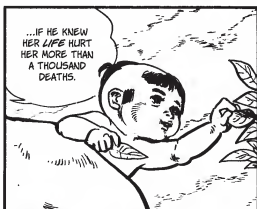
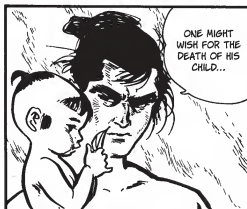


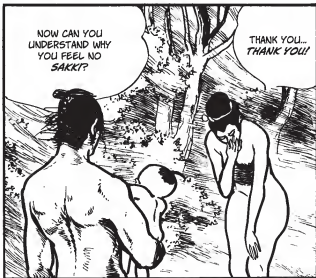
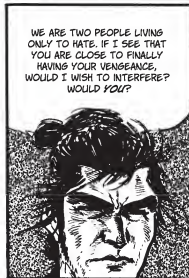
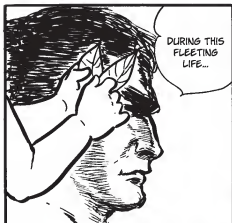




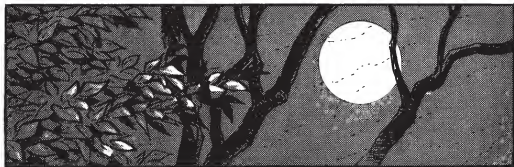














THE LORD  
I ONCE SERVED,  
MATSUDAIRA DAIGAKU-  
SAMA, WAS OBSESSED  
BEYOND REASON BY  
THE ARTS OF  
WAR.



AND SO,  
IN THE SAME  
WAY THAT HE  
MADE ME HIS  
BESSHIKI-  
ONNA...

...THERE WAS  
ANOTHER. A MAN  
WHO FOLLOWED A  
MYSTERIOUS  
SORT OF  
BUSHIDO  
CALLED  
GAN-  
RYU.



HIS NAME  
WAS KOZUKA ENKI,  
AND OUR LORD  
EMPLOYED HIM  
AS WELL.



KOZUKA  
ENKI...WAS  
ALWAYS  
ATTACKING  
ME.

HE SAID WE  
GOMUNE WERE  
UNCLEAN. FILTH! HE  
SAID THAT NO MATTER  
HOW GOOD I WAS  
WITH THE KODACHI,  
I WAS JUST A  
PERFORMER.



HE SAID  
HIRING A WOMAN  
FROM THE GOMUNE  
TO BE A BESSHIKI-  
ONNA...

...BESMIRCHED  
THE FACE OF  
TENDO HAN.



THE SWORD IS A  
SAMURAI'S HEART!  
SWORDSMANSHIP  
IS SAMURAI ART!

HE SAID EVEN OUR  
LORD'S SERVING WOMEN  
WERE DEFILED BY RECEIVING  
WEAPONS TRAINING FROM SUCH  
A LOW CREATURE...ON AND  
ON. IT NEVER STOPPED!

....  
....



UNTIL...UNTIL  
I FORCED MY  
WAY INTO KOZUKA  
ENKI'S DOJO.

CAN YOU  
UNDERSTAND  
MY FURY? MY  
DESIRE TO SETTLE  
THINGS ONCE AND  
FOR ALL BY THE  
SWORD?



AND  
THEN...



I...

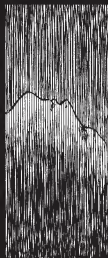
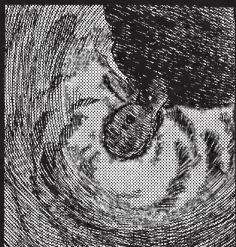


HE...







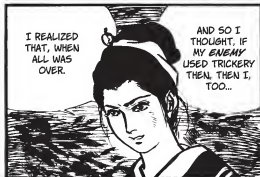




IF HIS **BOKUTO**  
GAVE OFF FLAMES, HE  
MUST HAVE SOAKED IT  
IN OIL AND SECRETLY LIT  
IT...THE **FAN** AS WELL.  
ALL TO ACCENTUATE  
HIS EYES...



TRICKERY, DESIGNED  
TO CONFUSE AND ROB  
HIS OPPONENTS OF  
THEIR WILL...NO TRUE  
**SAMURAI** WOULD DO  
THIS. BUT IF HE WAS  
A **HYPNOTIST**...



I REALIZED  
THAT, WHEN  
ALL WAS  
OVER.

AND SO I  
THOUGHT, IF  
MY **ENEMY**  
USED TRICKERY  
THEN, THEN I,  
TOO...



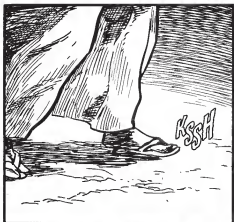
SO I WAS  
CORRECT...YOUR  
TATTOO...

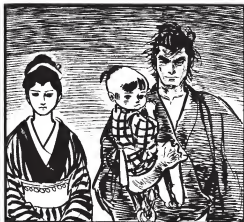
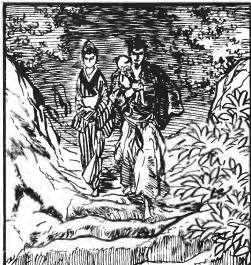








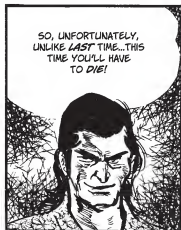




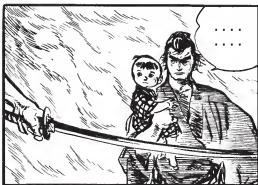








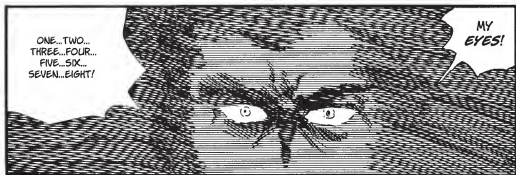




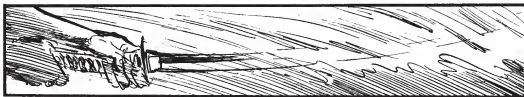
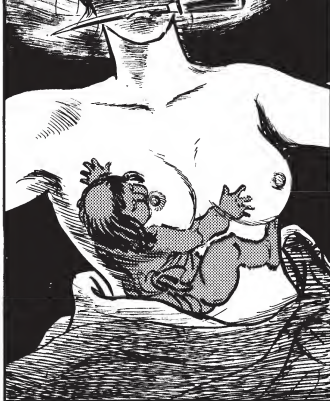




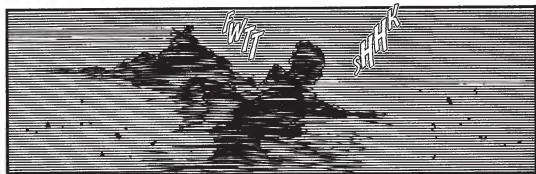




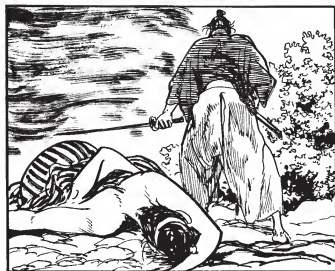
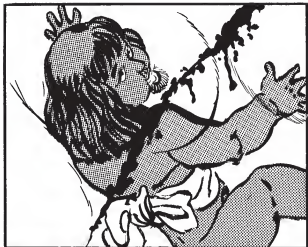


















# GLOSSARY

## **adauchi**

Revenge killing. It was accepted practice in the Edo period to kill the person who had killed one's lord or relatives. If the case was strong, the authorities would turn a blind eye to the killing.

## **bokutō**

A wooden practice sword.

## **bu**

Approximately 3 millimeters.

## **buke**

A samurai household.

## **bushidō**

The way of the warrior.

## **currency**

*mon* – A copper coin.

*kan* – A bundle of 1,000 *mon*.

*monme* – A silver piece.

*ryō* – A gold piece, worth 60 *monme* or 4 *kan*.

## **daimyō**

A feudal lord.

## **dōtanuki**

A battle sword. Literally, "sword that cuts through torsos."

## **Edo**

The capital of medieval Japan and the seat of the shogunate. The site of modern-day Tokyo.

## **han**

A feudal domain.

## **hatamoto**

*Daimyō* considered utterly loyal to the Tokugawa clan, with the right to meet the shōgun face to face. Their title, "standard bearers," came from history, when the warriors who would be promoted in peacetime to *hatamoto* had been the most trusted allies of Tokugawa Ieyasu, the first of the Tokugawa shōguns.

## **hollyhock crest**

Each samurai family had a family crest considered synonymous with the clan itself. The Tokugawa clan crest was a three-leaved hollyhock. To point one's sword toward the shogun's crest was to point your sword toward the shogun himself, an unforgivable act of treason.

## **honorifics**

Japan is a class and status society, and proper forms of address are critical. Common markers of respect are the prefixes *o* and *go*, and a wide range of

suffixes. Some of the suffixes you will encounter in *Lone Wolf and Cub*:

**chan** – for children, young women, and close friends

**dono** – archaic; used for higher-ranked or highly respected figures

**sama** – used for superiors

**san** – the most common, used among equals or near-equals

**sensei** – used for teachers, masters, respected entertainers, and politicians

## jizō

Local deities, represented by simple stone statues by the roadside. Often decorated with red cloth bibs.

## kabuki

The best-known traditional Japanese theater, with elaborate staging and costumes. Tremendously popular with the townspeople of Edo.

## Kamigata

The area around the imperial capital of Kyoto and the merchant city of Osaka. Now referred to as Kinki.

## kan

6 *shaku*, approximately 1.8 meters.

## Kantō

Literally, “east of the gate.” Eastern Japan, north of the mountain chain around Mount Fuji, especially the region around Edo, present-day Tokyo.

## kasezue

Literally, “deer staff.” Distinguished by its antler-like cutting prongs.

## kintaro

A legendary feral child, with red skin and superhuman strength.

## kōgi kaishakunin

The shōgun’s own second, who performed executions ordered by the shōgun.

## kurobiki, shubiki

Edo was a castle town that rose up around the moats and ramparts of Edo castle, the stronghold of the Tokugawa clan. The central core of the city, administered by the *machi-bugyō* (Edo city commissioner) and home to the households and estates of *daimyō* and samurai, was demarcated on official maps by a black line, the *kurobiki*. An outer red line, or *shubiki*, marked the limits of Greater Edo, the *go-funai*. In the middle Edo period, the samurai class occupied some sixty percent of the city’s land, and temples and shrines another twenty percent. That left only twenty percent of the land for a burgeoning civilian population exceeding one million.

## machi-bugyō

The Edo city commissioner, combining the post of mayor and chief of police. A post held in monthly rotation by two senior Tokugawa vassals, in charge of

administration, maintaining the peace, and enforcing the law in Edo. Their rule extended only to commoners; samurai in Edo were controlled by their own *daimyō* and his officers. The *machi-bugyō* had an administrative staff and a small force of armed policemen at his disposal.

### **mage**

Pronounced *mah-gay*. The samurai's topknot.

### **mu**

Nothingness. A crucial concept in Zen Buddhism, and a goal of all the martial arts. Clearing the mind of all extraneous thoughts and connections, to exist wholly in the moment, freed of all attachment to life and the world around you.

### **namu**

From the Sanskrit *namas*: "take refuge in the Buddha." A common prayer for the dead.

### **nō**

Traditional theater, performed in masks on a bare stage. Favored by the samurai class.

### **rōnin**

A masterless samurai. Literally, "one adrift on the waves." Members of the samurai caste who have lost their masters through the dissolution of *han*, expulsion for misbehavior, or other reasons. Prohibited from working as farmers or merchants under the strict Confucian caste system imposed by the Tokugawa shogunate, many impoverished *rōnin* became "hired guns" for whom the code of the samurai was nothing but empty words.

### **ryū**

Often translated as "school." The many variations of swordsmanship and other martial arts were passed down from generation to generation to the offspring of the originator of the technique or set of techniques, and to any *deishu* students that sought to learn from the master. The largest schools had their own *dōjō* training centers and scores of students. An effective swordsman had to study the different techniques of the various schools to know how to block them in combat. Many *ryū* also had a set of special, secret techniques that were only taught to school initiates.

### **sakki**

The palpable desire to kill, directed at another person. Sometimes called blood lust. Based on the concept of *ki*, or energy, found in spiritual practices and Japanese martial arts like Aikido. These body energies can be felt beyond the physical self by the trained and self-aware.

### **sanpin**

A derogatory term for low-rank samurai. From the losing three-and-one combination in dice games.

### **seisatsu yodatsu**

Under the four-caste social system imposed by the Tokugawa shogunate, the samurai class had the unquestioned right to kill those in lower castes, often for the smallest of insults and infractions.

### **shaku**

10 *sun*, approximately 30 centimeters.

### **sun**

Approximately 3 centimeters.

# KAZUO KOIKE

Though widely respected as a powerful writer of graphic fiction, Kazuo Koike has spent a lifetime reaching beyond the bounds of the comics medium. Aside from co-creating and writing the successful *Lone Wolf and Cub* and *Crying Freeman* manga, Koike has hosted television programs; founded a golf magazine; produced movies; written popular fiction, poetry, and screenplays; and mentored some of Japan's best manga talent.

*Lone Wolf and Cub* was first serialized in Japan in 1970 (under the title *Kozure Okami*) in *Manga Action* magazine and continued its hugely popular run for many years, being collected as the stories were published, and reprinted worldwide. Koike collected numerous awards for his work on the series throughout the next decade. Starting in 1972, Koike adapted the popular manga into a series of six films, the *Baby Cart Assassin* saga, garnering widespread commercial success and critical acclaim for his screenwriting.

This wasn't Koike's only foray into film and video. In 1996, *Crying Freeman*, the manga Koike created with artist Ryoichi Ikegami, was

produced in Hollywood and released to commercial success in Europe and is currently awaiting release in America.

And to give something back to the medium that gave him so much, Koike started the *Gekiga Sonjuku*, a college course aimed at helping talented writers and artists — such as *Ranma 1/2* creator Rumiko Takahashi — break into the comics field.

The driving focus of Koike's narrative is character development, and his commitment to character is clear: "Comics are carried by characters. If a character is well created, the comic becomes a hit." Kazuo Koike's continued success in comics and literature has proven this philosophy true.



# GOSEKI KOJIMA

Goseki Kojima was born on November 3, 1928, the very same day as the godfather of Japanese comics, Osamu Tezuka. While just out of junior high school, the self-taught Kojima began painting advertising posters for movie theaters to pay his bills.

In 1950, Kojima moved to Tokyo, where the postwar devastation had given rise to special manga forms for audiences too poor to buy the new manga magazines. Kojima created art for *kami-shibai*, or “paper-play” narrators, who would use manga story sheets to present narrated street plays. Kojima moved on to creating works for the *kashi-bon* market, bookstores that rented out books, magazines, and manga to mostly low-income readers. He soon became highly popular among *kashi-bon* readers.

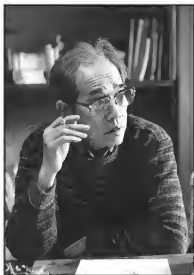
In 1967, Kojima broke into the magazine market with his series *Dojinki*. As the manga magazine market grew and diversified, he turned out a steady stream of popular series.

In 1970, in collaboration with Kazuo Koike, Kojima began the work that would seal his reputation, *Kozure*

*Okami* (*Lone Wolf and Cub*). Before long the story had become a gigantic hit, eventually spinning off a television series, six motion pictures, and even theme song records. Koike and Kojima were soon dubbed the “golden duo” and produced success after success on their way to the pinnacle of the manga world.

When *Manga Japan* magazine was launched in 1994, Kojima was asked to serve as consultant, and he helped train the next generation of manga artists.

In his final years, Kojima turned to creating original graphic novels based on the movies of his favorite director, Akira Kurosawa. Kojima passed away on January 5, 2000 at the age of 71.



# RONIN REPORT

By Tim Ervin-Gore

## Weapons Glossary: Part One

Swords are by far the most romantic instruments of death in Japanese feudal history; from the graceful long sword, also called a *daito* or *katana*; and the shorter but powerful *wakizashi*; to the *tanto* used in the infamous *seppuku* act. Magnificent enough to supplant the noble horse and bow as the weapon of choice for samurai, the blade took on an almost religious significance, its art refined and secretive, both in the making and the wielding.

And the practice of making a good sword was kept secretive. Creating such a weapon is painstaking, scientific, and exact, and the art is practically lost. In the *Samurai Sword* handbook by John Yumato, much can be learned about the construction and identification of swords. But in writing *Lone Wolf and Cub*, Koike and Kojima showed a marked fascination with the plethora of dangerous and exotic weapons which evolved in feudal Japan. Many of these weapons can be found in common reference books, but quite a few are too obscure for a quick study. The following is a brief index of some of the weapons found in the first four volumes of *Lone Wolf and Cub*.

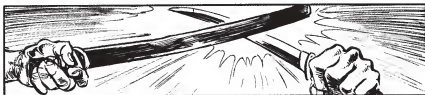


Fig. 1. *tanto*

In traditional Japanese sword smithery, three traditional sizes of swords evolved over a long period of time. The *tanto* (fig. 1) was the most commonly available. Often, under decree of stiff shogun rule, commoners were prohibited from carrying blades at all, aside from those used in agriculture and industry. When the



peasants decided to rise up against the ruling warrior factions, fewer dangerous weapons made it easier to quell the unruly citizens. However, when it was authorized (or out of sight), the simple and concealable *tanto* was the secret pillow partner, often wielded by women, and easily hidden in the folds of one's robes. Dogged by its reputation as a belly-slicing suicide instrument, the *tanto* was a useful second sword to the thrifty samurai. These knives were generally less than 12 inches in blade length, and, due to a largely utilitarian role, not always of the highest quality.

The *wakizashi* (or *kodachi*) (fig. 2), a medium sized sword 1-2 feet in length, was a stout and useful weapon. In *Lone Wolf and Cub*, Ogami's *dotanuki* is identified as a *wakizashi*, and a mean one at that. Miyamoto Musashi, a renowned samurai from the early 1600s, established a style of carrying and

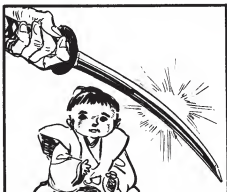


Fig. 2. *wakizashi*

wielding swords that would change the face of the samurai forever, that of carrying two swords (or *dai-sho*), and fighting with both at the same time. This new method popularized the making of swords in pairs. Though occasionally a samurai would choose to pair his long sword with a *tanto*, the samurai elite most likely carried a *wakizashi* as the match of his *daito*.



Fig. 3. *daito*

The *daito* (*odachi*, *katana*) (fig. 3), long and graceful, was the polished trophy of the samurai elite. Such swords of high quality and reputable manufacture were highly treasured and handed down through generations. This is the sword most romanticized in literature, film, and manga. A *daito* sword was usually over 2 feet in length, occasionally built longer to match the will and height of the samurai who wielded it. Being the main battle blade of the samurai, the *daito* was created with extreme precision, accounting for generations upon generations of secretive smithery. The methods of the archaic master swordsmiths were lost in waves of less violent times, as the masters themselves turned their skills and shops over to more modern uses, such as the manufacture of scissors and other tools. Their swords, however, still grace the walls of museums and collectors, many in fine condition, a testimony to their makers.



Fig. 4. *kozuka*

A samurai may have kept a few small knives for utility and tactical purposes, occasionally mounted in the hilt of a *daito*. These knives may have been used for throwing at an enemy or a last-ditch cut to the throat. The larger of these knives was the *kozuka* (fig. 4), which makes numerous appearances in the *Lone Wolf and Cub* series. An example of Koike and Kojima's use of such a weapon occurs in "The Flute of the Fallen Tiger" (*LW&C* Vol. 3), in which one of the Bentenrai brothers throws a small knife past the face of a mouthy commoner in a threatening gesture. Ogami returns the blade by tossing it straight into the scabbard of one of the brother's swords. As a side note, it should be mentioned that a few pages after the appearance of this *kozuka*, Ogami refers to it as a *kogara* — a small bird. But as Ogami's blade is referred to as a *dotanuki*, so would other blades be named after their

performance. So, a small blade made to fly swiftly through the air might have been called a *kogara*. Even more interesting were *wari-bashi* (split chopsticks). These small knives were likely to be quite handy for any number of uses. According to Yumoto's handbook, *wari-bashi* were used to secure one's hair, and their bases could handily be used as ear cleaners.

But the sword was not the first weapon, and its exclusive availability made it scarce amongst the fighting foot soldiers. Instead, many soldiers employed spears and spear-like instruments to occasionally administer slow death upon their enemies. One particularly effective method of fighting was the use of a spear from horseback (fig. 5), as shown in "Suio School Zanbato" (*LW&C* Vol. 1). Skill



Fig. 5. spear from horseback

with a spear was a highly regarded art, and coupled with the furious gallop of a powerful horse, the weapon was difficult to avoid and painfully effective. A pierced torso from a charge with a spear left many unfortunate soldiers groaning in pools of blood, awaiting merciful death.



Fig. 6. *naginata*

Such an offensive created the need for a properly defensive weapon. Taking up this duty was the incredibly effective *naginata* (fig. 6). With a long, wooden handle and a curved, one-sided blade, the

*naginata* was a vicious instrument akin to the halberd, historically used to chop the legs of cavalry horses and fight swordsmen at a safe distance. In *Lone Wolf and Cub*, Ogami's spring-loaded cart handles are a form of *naginata*, which he employs with deadly effect. Although the long blades of Ogami's spring-loaded pole-arms look a bit like the similar *nagamaki*, the handle of the weapon is longer than the blade, which was apparently the measure of difference between the two weapons. The *naginata* is a graceful weapon and is a popular modern martial art form.

In *Lone Wolf and Cub*, many pages are devoted to exploring the effectiveness of these standard war weapons, but Koike and Kojima seemed to enjoy the less conventional weapons and their tactical uses. One such weapon, or rather, an extension of numerous weapons, was the weighted chain. In *Classical Bujutsu*, an excellent study of Japanese martial tradition, Don Draeger describes the sickle and chain, or *kusarigama* (fig. 7), a multi-resourceful weapon. Casual observance of many Japanese martial traditions exposes likely evolutions of weapons, and some of the

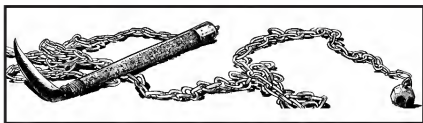


Fig. 7. *kusarigama*

more impressive weapons derived from agricultural tools. Though pedestrian on its own, the addition of a light chain with an iron weight on the end changed the sickle into a death trap. Thrown by an expert, the weight could break bones (or trees, according to Koike and Kojima), and the chain could wrap around an opponent and his arms, leaving him vulnerable to the sickle's blade. An excellent example of the *kusarigama* and its use is shown at the end of "Close Quarters" (*LW&C* Vol. 3), in which Ogami finds himself face-to-face with a master of the *kusarigama* and is challenged to get beyond the reach of the iron weight at the end of the chain. The sickle aside, the weighted chain makes numerous appearances in *Lone Wolf and Cub*. In "A Father Knows

His Child Heart, as Only a Child Can Know His Father's" (*LW<sup>o</sup>C* Vol. 1), a weighted chain is planted in the staff of one of Ogami's opponents. In "Eight Gates of Deceit" (also in Vol. 1), a woman attacks Ogami with a short sword and weighted chain, suggesting that there were many schools of study integrating such weapons.

Koike and Kojima's fascination with exotic weapons extends beyond what can be found in most reference books. In "The Flute of the Fallen Tiger," the three Benteinrai brothers carry individual, specialized weapons of destruction. One brother carries a simple sword, but wields it in a special way, while another swings a short iron club, and the third brandishes a bladed bear claw. The iron club (fig. 8) was a useful weapon to many samurai. This pictured iron club is shorter than most surviving examples, and it seems to have a wooden haft, but the iron end works in the same way: brutal, bloody bludgeoning. In "The Bell Warden" (*LW<sup>o</sup>C* Vol. 4), three brothers specialize in weapons that present Ogami with new challenges. The *manrikisa*, the *sanjinrai*, and the *injiuchi tsubute* are each dangerous hand-to-hand combat weapons (see p. 45).



Fig. 7. iron club

With the motivation to outmaneuver the other schools and combatants, the samurai took it upon himself to learn the ways of all weapons in existence. Given the assortment of these dangerous objects, and the way each person creates his or her own variation, one could imagine what a challenge it would be to be Ogami Itto. It takes time to learn so much about the art of death, but such study was necessary to earn the position of *kogi kaishakunin* — which helps explain why it angered the Lone Wolf to spend such an effort only to be bested by corruption. Like the lost art of swordsmithing, the ever-changing art of war, and the ever-present involvement of politics, would eventually drain the warrior from us all.

*Special thanks to Stan Sakai.*



*Lone Wolf and Cub* (*Kozure Okami* in Japan) is acknowledged worldwide for the brilliant writing of series creator Kazuo Koike and the groundbreaking cinematic visuals of the late Goseki Kojima. Creating unforgettable imagery of stark beauty, kinetic fury, and visceral thematic power, the epic samurai adventure has influenced a generation of visual storytellers both in Japan and in the West.

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